

Il Barbiere di Siviglia

A Guide for Educators



The Met
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Opera

Ken Howard/Metropolitan Opera

INTRIGUE, DISGUISES, AND LOVE TRIUMPHANT—IT'S ALL IN A DAY'S WORK FOR FIGARO, the barber of Seville. By the time Gioachino Rossini sat down in 1816 to write his great comic opera *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, both he and his leading character already enjoyed immense popularity and far-reaching fame. At twenty-four years of age, Rossini was already harvesting the fruits of international acclaim that he would savor for the rest of his life. And in the forty-one years since Figaro had first set foot on the Parisian stage, in a play by the French watchmaker-turned-nobleman Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, the quick-witted barber had been feted by emperors, feared by kings, and embraced by two generations of composers and poets.

Wily, witty, and urbane, Figaro cut a dashing figure on the stage. But it was Rossini's music that granted the beloved barber his immortality. Soaring lyricism, subtle musical characterizations, and infinitely hummable melodies bring Beaumarchais's story to life in a way that has captivated opera-goers for two centuries. Bartlett Sher's production, a favorite at the Metropolitan Opera, whisks the audience back to the sun-drenched streets of eighteenth-century Seville. Yet this beguiling tale, with its fast-paced zingers and cornucopia of musical treats, still proves that sometimes one clever barber is all it takes for everyone to live happily ever after.

This guide presents *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* as a piece of musical comedy that reflects profound social changes taking place at the time of its composition. The materials on the following pages are designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of this Final Dress Rehearsal performance. By presenting the opera in the context of historical events with which students may be familiar, such as the French and American Revolutions, it will help students engage critically with the opera while relating the opera to other classroom subjects. This guide also includes biographical data about the composer and information on the opera's literary source, and a series of activities to bring the opera and its music into the classroom.

THE WORK:

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA
An opera in two acts, sung in Italian
Music by Gioachino Rossini
Libretto by Cesare Sterbini
Based on the play *Le Barbier de Séville* by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais
First performed February 20, 1816
at the Teatro Argentina, Rome, Italy

PRODUCTION

Maurizio Benini, Conductor
Bartlett Sher, Production
Michael Yeargan, Set Design
Catherine Zuber, Costume Design
Christopher Akerlind, Lighting Design

STARRING

Pretty Yende
ROSINA (mezzo-soprano)

Javier Camarena
COUNT ALMAVIVA (tenor)

Peter Mattei
FIGARO (baritone)

Maurizio Muraro
DR. BARTOLO (bass)

Mikhail Petrenko
DON BASILIO (bass)

Production a gift of The Sybil B.
Harrington Endowment Fund



Photo: Johnathan Tichler/
Metropolitan Opera

The Metropolitan Opera is a vibrant home for the most creative and talented singers, conductors, composers, musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers from around the world.

The Metropolitan Opera was founded in 1883, with its first opera house built on Broadway and 39th Street by a group of wealthy businessmen who wanted their own theater. In the company's early years, the management changed course several times, first performing everything in Italian (even *Carmen* and *Lohengrin*), then everything in German (even *Aida* and *Faust*), before finally settling into a policy of performing most works in their original language.

Almost from the beginning, it was clear that the opera house on 39th Street did not have adequate stage facilities. But it was not until the Met joined with other New York institutions in forming Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts that a new home became possible. The new Metropolitan Opera House, which opened at Lincoln Center in September of 1966, was equipped with the finest technical facilities of the day.

Each season the Met stages more than 200 opera performances in New York. More than 800,000 people attend the performances in the opera house during the season, and millions more experience the Met through new media distribution initiatives and state-of-the-art technology.

This guide includes several sections with a variety of background material on *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.

• **The Source, The Story, and Who's Who in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia***

• **A Timeline: The historical context of the opera's story and composition**

• **A Closer Look: A brief article highlighting an important aspect of Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia***

• **Guided Listening: A series of musical excerpts with a roadmap to musical understanding**

• **Student Critique: A performance activity, highlighting specific aspects of this production; and topics for wrap-up discussion following students' attendance**

• **Further Resources: Recommendations for additional study, both online and in print**

• **Glossary: Common musical terms found in this guide and in the concert hall**

The activities in this guide will focus on several aspects of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*:

- The relationship between Rossini's opera and the original play by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais
- The role of contemporary politics in the creation and reception of both Rossini's opera and Beaumarchais's play
- Rossini's use of music to create entertaining and memorable characters
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes materials for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, and seeks to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts as a whole—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression.

SUMMARY

Count Almaviva, a Spanish nobleman, is in love with Rosina. Hoping to be loved for himself (and not for his money), the count has disguised himself as a poor student named Lindoro and goes to sing to her outside of her home. Soon Figaro, the barber who knows all the secrets of the town, arrives and recognizes "Lindoro" as Count Almaviva. The count asks Figaro to help him woo Rosina, and Figaro hatches a plan. Rosina, meanwhile, has fallen in love with the singer she heard outside her window. She writes a letter to the unknown student. Suddenly, her guardian, Dr. Bartolo, arrives. He also hopes to marry Rosina not because he loves her, but because he wants her money. Bartolo's friend Don Basilio tells Bartolo that Count Almaviva has been seen in Seville, and offers to help Bartolo keep the count away from Rosina. Suddenly Count Almaviva, now disguised as a soldier, arrives at Bartolo's house. His behavior angers Bartolo, who demands that this disorderly soldier be arrested. When more soldiers arrive to arrest him, Almaviva quietly reveals to them that he is the count, and they let him go.

Hoping to get close to Rosina, Count Almaviva returns to Dr. Bartolo's home. This time, he is dressed as "Don Alonso," a music student of Don Basilio, and says that he has come to give Rosina a singing lesson. Bartolo is skeptical. He finally allows the lesson to go ahead, but refuses to leave the room. Figaro arrives to shave Bartolo, and steals the key to Rosina's balcony door. Rosina and Almaviva agree to meet on her balcony that night so that they can run away together, but Dr. Bartolo overhears them and is furious. He decides to marry Rosina as soon as possible, and convinces Rosina that Lindoro does not love her. Rosina is heartbroken. That night, as a thunderstorm rages outside, the count and Figaro come to Rosina's balcony. Rosina accuses Almaviva, whom she still believes to be Lindoro, of not loving her. Finally, the count reveals his true identity, and asks her to marry him. Bartolo arrives with soldiers to stop the wedding, but realizes he is too late. Figaro, Rosina, and the count all rejoice in this happy ending.



Photo: Marty Sohl/
Metropolitan Opera



Ken Howard/
Metropolitan Opera

THE SOURCE: *LE BARBIER DE SÉVILLE* ("THE BARBER OF SEVILLE"), BY PIERRE-AUGUSTIN CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS

The three "Figaro" plays by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais were among the most popular comedic plays of the late eighteenth century, and remain among the very few theatrical works of the era that are still performed today. The first, *The Barber of Seville*, was premiered in 1775. Both the play itself and the character Figaro were tremendously popular, and Beaumarchais soon set about writing two more plays featuring the same cast of characters: *The Marriage of Figaro* (first performed in 1784) and *The Guilty Mother* (1792). Within a few years of *The Barber of Seville's* premiere, composers had already begun to adapt Beaumarchais's comedies in operatic settings; one of the most famous examples is Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786). Yet Figaro was, from the very beginning, steeped in music. Beaumarchais first wrote *The Barber of Seville* as a comic opera; when this version was rejected by the impresario to whom Beaumarchais presented it, he set about writing his story as a spoken play. Even in the spoken comedy, opera looms large. Beaumarchais's "Rosine" is a singer, performing in a fictional opera called *The Useless Precaution*. Rossini and his librettist Cesare Sterbini, aware of this history, referenced it in their own opera: during her singing lesson with Don Alfonso, Rosina says that she will sing an aria from *La Precauzione Inutile* (*The Useless Precaution*).



Photo: Ken Howard/
Metropolitan Opera

SYNOPSIS

Act I: Seville, Spain.

Count Almaviva, a Spanish nobleman, is in love with Rosina. Hoping to be loved for himself (and not for his money), the count has disguised himself as a poor student named Lindoro to woo her. As the opera begins, "Lindoro" comes to serenade Rosina outside the home of Dr. Bartolo, where Rosina lives under lock and key. Soon Figaro, the barber who knows all the secrets of the town, arrives. Recognizing "Lindoro" as Count Almaviva, he tells the count that Bartolo is not actually Rosina's father, but her guardian in fact, Bartolo plans to marry her in order to get her fortune. Figaro hatches a plan. He suggests that the count disguise himself again, this time as a soldier, and demand lodging in Dr. Bartolo's residence. This way, he will be close to Rosina. Almaviva is overjoyed, and Figaro looks forward to a nice cash pay-off.

Rosina, alone in her room, thinks about the voice she heard serenading her a short while before and admits that she has fallen in love with the singer. Knowing that Dr. Bartolo will never allow her contact with the unknown man, she decides to send Lindoro a letter by way of Figaro. Figaro arrives, but before Rosina can speak with him Bartolo appears with Don Basilio, Rosina's music teacher. Basilio tells Bartolo that Count Almaviva has been seen in Seville. Bartolo, who knows that Almaviva is in love with Rosina, is furious, and the cunning Basilio suggests that they get rid of the count by spreading wicked rumors about him. Bartolo decides to marry Rosina that very day, and he and Basilio leave to prepare the marriage contract. Figaro, who has overheard the plot, warns Rosina. When Rosina asks Figaro about the handsome young man she saw outside her window, Figaro says that it was the student Lindoro, and promises to deliver her letter to him.

Bartolo, deeply suspicious, accuses Rosina of writing a letter to a secret lover. Just at that moment, shouting is heard: Count Almaviva, now disguised as a drunken soldier, has arrived at Bartolo's home. Bartolo claims that he has official exemption from providing housing to soldiers, and in the commotion Almaviva manages to reveal to Rosina that he is, in fact, Lindoro, and to pass her a letter of his own. Bartolo demands that Rosina hand over the note, but she tricks him by giving him her laundry list instead. The argument grows more heated, and Figaro, Don Basilio, and the servant woman Berta burst in, announcing that the shouting can be heard throughout the city. Soldiers arrive to arrest the drunken soldier. When he quietly reveals to them that he is actually the count, the soldiers promptly release him. Everyone except Figaro is amazed by this turn of events, and the main characters sing a finale together, reflecting on the chaos and confusion of the day.

Act II

Bartolo is still suspicious, and suggests that perhaps the drunken soldier was a spy for Count Almaviva. The count returns, this time disguised as Don Alonso, a music teacher and student of Don Basilio, to give Rosina her singing lesson; Basilio, he claims, is ill. Bartolo is skeptical until "Don Alonso" shows him Rosina's letter to Lindoro, claiming to have found it at Count Almaviva's lodgings. He says that he will use it to convince Rosina that Lindoro is merely toying with her on Almaviva's behalf. This convinces Bartolo that "Don Alonso" is indeed a student of the scheming Basilio, and he allows the lesson to go ahead. Bartolo finds the music boring and soon nods off. As he snores, Almaviva (whom Rosina believes to be Lindoro) and Rosina declare their love.

Figaro arrives to shave Dr. Bartolo. Bartolo is reluctant to leave Rosina alone with the singing teacher, and sends Figaro to fetch towels. Figaro, always resourceful, uses the opportunity to steal the key to Rosina's balcony door, then causes a diversion, forcing Bartolo to leave the two young lovers alone. Suddenly Don Basilio, the true singing teacher, arrives. Figaro, Almaviva, and Rosina bribe him to leave. While Bartolo gets his shave, Almaviva plots with Rosina to meet on her balcony that night so they can elope but Bartolo overhears them and flies into a rage.

The elderly maid Berta comments on the crazy household. Bartolo summons Basilio, telling him to bring a notary so that Bartolo can marry Rosina right away. Bartolo then shows Rosina the letter she wrote to Lindoro, calling it proof that Lindoro is in league with the count. Heartbroken and convinced that she has been deceived, Rosina agrees to marry Bartolo. While a thunderstorm rages outside, Figaro and Almaviva climb a ladder to Rosina's balcony. Rosina appears and confronts "Lindoro," who finally reveals his true identity. Basilio shows up with the notary but, bribed and threatened, he agrees to be a witness to the marriage of Rosina and Almaviva. Bartolo arrives with soldiers, but it is too late. He accepts that he has been beaten, and Figaro, Rosina, and the count celebrate this happy ending.

VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian "mezzo"=middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

COUNTERTENOR

a male singing voice whose vocal range is equivalent to that of a contralto, mezzo-soprano, or (less frequently) a soprano, usually through the use of falsetto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice

Character		Pronunciation Guide	Voice Type	The Lowdown
Figaro	A barber	FEE-gah-roh	Baritone	The barber of Seville of the opera's title. Clever and resourceful, Figaro helps Count Almaviva and Rosina overcome the many obstacles on the path to true love.
Rosina	A wealthy young lady from Seville	Roh-ZEE-nah	Soprano	Beautiful and independent, Rosina will not allow Dr. Bartolo to stand between her and Lindoro, the man she loves.
Count Almaviva	A Spanish count, in love with Rosina	Count Ahl-mah-VEE-vah	Tenor	In love with Rosina, Count Almaviva needs Figaro's help to win the woman of his dreams. Over the course of the opera, Almaviva will adopt many different disguises.
Lindoro	A poor student, one of Count Almaviva's disguises	Leen-DOHR-oh		Hoping to be loved by Rosina for himself (and not for his money), Count Almaviva disguises himself as the poor student Lindoro.
Don Alonso	A music teacher, one of Count Almaviva's disguises	Don Ahl-OHN-soh		In order to be close to Rosina, Count Almaviva dresses as Don Alonso, a supposed student of Don Basilio, to give Rosina her singing lesson.
Dr. Bartolo	Rosina's guardian	BAR-toh-loh	Baritone	A greedy schemer, Dr. Bartolo hopes to marry his ward, Rosina, in order to get her money.
Don Basilio	A music teacher, Dr. Bartolo's accomplice	Don Bah-ZEE-lee-oh	Bass	A friend of Dr. Bartolo, Don Basilio has a trick or two up his sleeve to keep Rosina away from Count Almaviva.

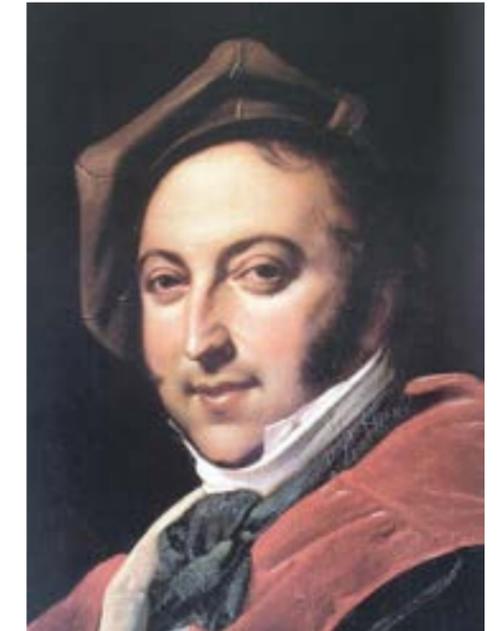
— **1775** *The Barber of Seville*, a comic play by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, premieres in Paris. The main characters, including Count Almaviva, Rosina, and the titular barber Figaro, will appear again in two later plays by Beaumarchais: *The Marriage of Figaro* (1784) and *The Guilty Mother* (1792).

— **1786** Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's opera *Le Nozze di Figaro* (*The Marriage of Figaro*), based on Beaumarchais's second "Figaro" play, premieres in Vienna. By this time, Figaro is recognized and adored from Paris to Saint Petersburg, thanks in no small part to four other operas based on *The Barber of Seville* that have appeared since the premiere of Beaumarchais's work.

— **1792** Gioachino Rossini is born on February 29 in Pesaro, a town on the Adriatic coast of Italy. Both of his parents are musicians: his father plays horn, and his mother is an opera singer.

— **1804** The Rossini family moves to Bologna. Young Gioachino, a talented musician who already enjoys an active career as a performer, begins formal studies in composition. Soon he will begin composing individual arias for operas being performed in the area.

— **1810** Rossini's first opera, a short farce, is performed in Venice. Although his next opera will not be performed until October 1811, Rossini's career soon gains tremendous momentum, and he writes seven more operas in the next sixteen months.



A portrait of Rossini in 1820 (Bologna, Museo internazionale e biblioteca della musica)



- **1813** Two operas, premiered in February and May, give Rossini his first taste of international fame. One of these, *L'Italiana in Algeri* (*The Italian Girl in Algeria*), is still regularly performed today.
- **1816** On February 20, *Rossini's Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*) premieres at the Teatro Argentina in Rome. The opera, with a libretto by Cesare Sterbini, is prepared in a matter of weeks some sources maintain that Rossini composed the music in a mere nine days! and the opening night performance is a flop. In August, following slight revisions, the opera is performed again in Bologna, this time to thunderous acclaim.
- **1817** Riding the wave of success of the Bologna performance, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* is performed in eight more cities in Italy, as well as in Barcelona. The opera's popularity continues to expand: the following year, it will be performed no fewer than twenty-two times in London. A year after that, it will grace the stage in Berlin; soon, it will have been performed in cities as diverse as Vienna, Edinburgh, Saint Petersburg, and New York.
- **1824** By the age of thirty-two, Rossini has written thirty-four operas and enjoys international acclaim of staggering proportions. In a biography of Rossini published the following year, the French novelist Stendhal writes that "Napoleon is dead, but a new conqueror is now spoken of from Moscow to Naples, from London to Vienna, from Paris to Calcutta." Rossini relocates to Paris.
- **1825** *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* becomes the first opera ever performed in Italian in New York City.
- **1829** Rossini's final opera, *Guillaume Tell* (*William Tell*) premieres in Paris. Following this work, Rossini falls silent; for the remaining four decades of his life, he will never write another large-scale opera. Instead, he turns his attention and accumulated wealth to cooking and exchanging recipes with famous chefs.
- **1868** On February 10, the 500th performance of *Guillaume Tell* takes place with great fanfare at the Paris Opéra. A few months later, on November 13, Rossini dies at his villa in the Parisian suburb of Passy. He is buried at Père-Lachaise cemetery in Paris.
- **1887** Two decades after Rossini's death his widow Olympe transports his remains to Italy. In May they are re-interred at the church of Santa Croce in Florence, where his final resting place may still be visited today.

FIGARO AND THE OPERA BUFFA REVOLUTION

"Figaro killed off the nobility," the French politician George Danton once declared. Figaro is "a revolution in action," proclaimed Napoleon Bonaparte. And even though Marie-Antoinette herself had played Rosine in Beaumarchais's play *The Barber of Seville*, her husband, King Louis XVI of France, would soon quip that "the Bastille would have to be pulled down" before its sequel could be performed. By the time Rossini was born, in 1792, the Bastille had indeed fallen. The French Revolution was in its third bloody year and Europe was reeling. Millennia-old social structures, predicated upon highly-codified class relationships, were quickly eroding as new ideas about equality and citizenship sent seismic shocks through the political landscape.

But why would the political giants of the age, from Louis XVI to Napoleon, single out Figaro (both the character and the play) as exceptionally revolutionary? In fact, the history of opera itself offers a clue. Since the advent of opera, around 1600, this musical genre had been the exclusive entertainment of the wealthy classes. Its characters were gods, mythological heroes, and the august figures of ancient Greece and Rome. Suddenly, in the middle of the eighteenth century, a new sub-genre burst forth. This opera buffa ("comic opera," in contrast to the earlier opera seria or "serious opera") not only depicted low-class characters such as maids, servants, and barbers, but even portrayed these lowly characters outwitting their rich employers. At first such comedies, which turned the established social order on its head, were enjoyed as benign entertainment. But by the 1780s a wildly popular play about a quick-witted barber seemed downright dangerous: it was only one year after Figaro's first appearance that a group of rag-tag colonies in North America declared their independence from the British monarchy and founded a country on the "self-evident" principle of equality for all. By the end of the century, Louis's head had fallen and Napoleon's armies were marching across the globe.

Rossini was no stranger to the revolutionary tendencies of the time. The Napoleonic wars had swept across Italy during his childhood. His father, Giuseppe Rossini, was briefly jailed in 1800 for incendiary political opinions, and social unrest across the continent would continue, unabated, throughout Rossini's life. Paris would see two more major revolts, in 1830 and 1848, while Rossini lived there. And in 1861, only seven years before Rossini's death, a series of revolutions on the Italian peninsula led to the unified Italy we know today. In 1816, when Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* was first performed in Rome, opera buffa as a genre was nothing new. But as the world continued to grow and change, Rossini's irresistible music gave a new voice to the barber who embodied, reflected, and even advanced the transformations of the age.



The Guided Listening Activities are designed to introduce students to a selection of memorable moments from the opera. They include information on what is happening dramatically, a description of the musical style, and a roadmap of musical features to listen for. Guided Listening Activities can be used by students and teachers of varying levels of musical experience.

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, teachers will need access to a recording of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and the libretto.

“ECCO RIDENTE IN CIELO” (CD 1, TRACK 3)

Shortly before dawn in the city of Seville, Count Almaviva comes to the town square where his beloved Rosina lives. He pays a group of musicians to accompany him as he serenades her. As a guitar plucks out an accompaniment, he sings a sweet, simple song about his beloved, who, unlike the rising sun “smiling in the sky,” has yet to appear at her window. In opera of this time, the complexity of an aria was associated with a character’s class. Count Almaviva has disguised himself as a poor student, and his music is thus gentle and simple. But he can’t hide his noble passion entirely: occasionally, when his emotions overtake him, virtuosic flourishes break through Almaviva’s simple melodies, reminding us of the nobleman hiding under the poor student’s cloak.

What to listen for:

- The difference between “Lindoro’s” simple melodies and Count Almaviva’s fancy flourishes
- How the orchestra approximates the sound of the small group of musicians visible onstage
- The burst of energetic music as the aria nears its end, which gives the scene a sense of dramatic direction

- (00:00) After an opening chord, Almaviva begins directing the town musicians, and the orchestra plays a gentle accompaniment reminiscent of plucked guitars. The winds and strings play the melody Almaviva will soon sing. The texture becomes livelier at (00:34), with staccato gestures and rising scales in the woodwinds.
- (00:56) Almaviva begins his simple serenade as the orchestra continues plucking out the “guitar” accompaniment.
- (01:23) “And you are not yet awake?” Almaviva asks, breaking into a flourish as he stretches out the final word of the question.
- (01:41) The original melody returns. Such repetition, associated with simple folk songs, is also representative of Lindoro’s status.
- (03:10) Thinking he has seen Rosina, Almaviva cannot contain his excitement, and the virtuosic singing of the nobleman overtakes the simple melody of the student. Both the orchestral accompaniment and the song’s melody become brighter and more dazzling, just like the rising sun to which Almaviva compares his beloved.

“LARGO AL FACTOTUM DELLA CITTÀ” (CD 1, TRACK 5)

As day breaks, Figaro arrives in the town square with his barber cart in tow. When he opens the cart we see the expected tools of the barber’s trade (wigs, combs and scissors, shaving equipment), but his song lets us know that he serves a far greater function in the town than merely cutting hair. This is our introduction to Figaro as a character and as a singer: listen to what he sings about the trade he plies, and listen to how he sings it.

What to listen for:

- The extraordinarily fast pace of Figaro’s singing: this is a style of singing called “patter song,” in which the goal is to sing as many words as possible in the shortest amount of time; patter songs usually have humorous texts, and were associated with low-class characters (like Figaro) or exceptionally immoral nobles (like Dr. Bartolo)
- The narrow melodic range: although patter singing is very fast, it does not have a wide melodic range (associated with noble characters); thus, while the impressively quick delivery makes Figaro seem very clever, he does not have the soaring melodies of the nobleman Count Almaviva
- The relatively light orchestral accompaniment, which stays out of the way of Figaro’s tongue-twisting singing

- (00:16) Figaro is heard singing from offstage. It seems that he is already in the midst of a song, and that we are catching fragments of this song as he nears. Throughout this aria, Figaro often sings wordless syllables like “la la la leh la.” Why do you think this might be?
- (00:36) “Make way for the people of the city!” Figaro sings. Suddenly his voice drops: “LARGO!” (“Make way!”). The juxtaposition of quick music with these sudden, jolting stops is like the bumping and jolting of the cart on cobblestone streets.
- (00:52) For a brief moment, Figaro sings a smooth melody about the pleasures of life, before returning to his patter song.
- (01:40) “I’m in motion night and day,” Figaro sings. The lickety-split tempo of his aria reflects this perfectly.
- (02:15) Figaro parodies the singing style of noble ladies and gentlemen: wild flourishes across a wide melodic range.
- (03:00) The music gets faster and faster as Figaro thinks about running hither and thither to satisfy everyone’s demands.
- (03:20) “Figaro, Figaro, Figaro!” is the cry he hears all day and night. It is also one of the aria’s most famous moments.
- (03:53) Listen to the melodies in the nimble wind instruments, which add to the general feeling of everything speeding up.

“UNA VOCE POCO FA” (CD 1, TRACK 10)

In Dr. Bartolo’s residence, Rosina reclines upon a sofa and thinks about the voice she “just heard.” Having decided she is in love with Lindoro, she sets about hatching a plan to win him for herself while under the ever-watchful eye of Dr. Bartolo. Although we have briefly seen Rosina before, when she appeared on her balcony, this is the first scene in which we will really get to know her. It turns out that she is clever, independent, and resourceful in her own right.

What to listen for:

- The way the music changes during the scene to reflect the development of the drama
- The music’s imitation of the characteristics Rosina describes: for instance, it is sweetly lilting when she sings “I’m sweet and loving,” and then fiery and virtuosic when she sings “I can be a viper!”

- (00:31) Rosina recalls the voice she heard, and decides, “Lindoro shall be mine.” Listen to how the increasing complexity of her melody relates to her increasing determination. The orchestral accompaniment is used only to punctuate her words, leaving plenty of space for vocal ornaments.
- (02:55) A more melodic section begins. Rosina lays out her plan for tricking Dr. Bartolo: she will be “well-behaved” and “respectful.” Listen for how the flute prefigures and then interacts with Rosina’s aria, making it seem calm and expansive.
- (03:48) But she also has it in her to be “a viper,” and “play a hundred tricks.” The music is suddenly quicker and more ornamented, reflecting this more active side of Rosina. Traditionally, many of her vocal ornaments would have been improvised, a testament to the astonishing abilities of the singer.
- (04:35) The music rushes forward, indicating that Rosina is ready to set her plan in motion.

"FREDDA ED IMMOBILE" "MA, SIGNOR..." (CD 2, TRACK 4)

Dr. Bartolo has called for the arrest of the disruptive drunken soldier. Quietly the soldier reveals himself as Count Almaviva to the chief of police, and the chief promptly releases him. The assembled household and townspeople are astonished at this turn of events. Rosina, Count Almaviva (who of course knows exactly what is going on), and Dr. Bartolo announce that they have been struck "frozen and motionless" by the surprise.

What to listen for:

- How the speed and volume build to give this Act I finale momentum and excitement
- How the characters are grouped musically to reflect their alliances at this point in the plot: Which characters sing the same music? Which characters sing at the same time?

Part 1: "Fredda ed immobile"

- (00:17) Rosina sings that she is "frozen and motionless." After the commotion of the previous scene, this slow melody and the quiet orchestral accompaniment make the music, too, seem frozen and still. As Count Almaviva and Dr. Bartolo join her, listen for the "imitative counterpoint": Rosina, Count Almaviva, and Dr. Bartolo all sing the same music but they do not start at the same time; rather, they sing it like a canon or round, one after the other.
- (00:39) Count Almaviva joins the round.
- (00:59) Dr. Bartolo joins the round.
- (01:19) "Look at Dr. Bartolo!" exclaims Figaro. In contrast to the relatively melodic "fredda ed immobile" sung by the noble characters, Figaro enters the musical fray with his characteristic patter singing.
- (02:46) Figaro snaps his fingers and the spell is broken: the confusion returns, the music gets faster and louder, and everyone starts singing together!
- (03:16) The final chorus begins with all the characters singing in unison (the same melody at the same time). In the midst of the dramatic chaos, how does this unison feel?
- (03:56) The short-lived vocal unison breaks up, indicating that the general dramatic confusion has overcome the brief moment of musical unity.
- (04:25) As the music picks up steam, the *accelerando* reminds us of how the noble characters are being "pushed around" by Figaro and Count Almaviva.
- (05:06) At the height of the commotion, the main characters all announce, "If this continues, I will go insane!" Suddenly, the music gets quiet again, offering the characters a moment of respite; this will also make the crescendo to the end of the Act seem even bigger and more exciting. The six main characters split into groups indicating who is in cahoots with whom: Figaro and Count Almaviva, Rosina and her maid Berta, and Dr. Bartolo and Don Basilio.
- (06:01) From here, it's all one big *crescendo* (increase of volume) and *accelerando* (acceleration) to the end!

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the *My Highs & Lows* reproducible handout found in the back of this guide.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS AND *IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-12.1d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

ENCOURAGING STUDENT RESPONSE IN ATTENDING THE FINAL DRESS REHEARSAL

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities help students analyze different aspects of the experience and engage critically with the performance. They will consider the creative choices that have been made for the particular production they are watching and examine different aspects of the performance.

The Student Critique activity incorporates a reproducible sheet. Students should bring this activity sheet to the final dress rehearsal and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activity directs attention to details of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed.

The activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. It serves to guide students toward a consistent set of objective observations, as well as to help them articulate their own opinions. It is designed to enrich the students' understanding of the art form as a whole. The ratings system encourages students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that require careful, critical thinking.

The *My Highs & Lows* handout can be found at the back of this guide.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? The discussion offers an opportunity to apply the notes on students' *My Highs & Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about the visual design of the Met production in short, to see themselves as *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* experts.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia is a powerhouse of comic characterization. Rossini's music, Sterbini's libretto, Bartlett Sher's production, and the singers' individual interpretations all work together to make *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*'s characters and events vivid and memorable. Now that students have seen the opera, ask them about how all elements of the opera script, music, costumes, wigs, makeup, and the stage sets work together to make the characters come to life. Some questions you might want them to consider are the following:

- How do Rossini (the composer) and Sterbini (the librettist) portray the characters in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*? Which characters seem realistic, and which are exaggerated caricatures? Why do you think this might be? And what role does music play in these characterizations?
- What is the role of singing in the plot for instance, Count Almaviva's song in the first scene, or the "singing lesson" at the beginning of Act II? Why might Rossini have chosen to portray singing and music in this way?
- Figaro is a barber, but he doesn't just cut hair. What else does he do?
- Over the course of the opera, Count Almaviva adopts several disguises. Why? Whom is he trying to trick? When he finally reveals his true identity at the end of the opera, were you surprised by how Rosina responded? How would you react?
- What do you think of Dr. Bartolo and Don Basilio? Are they funny? Frightening? Smart? Sympathetic? How else might you describe them, and why?

When the character of Figaro was first written, it was considered shocking that a barber (a servant) could outsmart noble characters. Based on your students' reactions to the individual characters and their portrayals, you may wish to engage this "revolutionary" aspect of the Figaro story. Are there any other plays, musicals, or other pieces of art they can think of that use musical or other forms of characterization to make a political or historical statement?

Finally, remember that opera is a multi-medial art form: any and all aspects of the performance your students have just seen including the act of seeing it live are important factors contributing to the overall experience. Ask them for any final thoughts and impressions. What did they find most memorable?

IN PRINT

The Barber of Seville: The Complete Opera on Two CDs, the Complete Libretto, and Critical Historical Commentary. Black Dog Opera Library. New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2006.

A multi-media introduction to Rossini's opera, including a full translation of the libretto, a high-quality audio recording of the entire opera, and an engaging historical essay. Available at the Metropolitan Opera Shop and online store.

Beaumarchais, Pierre-Augustin Caron de. *The Figaro Trilogy: The Barber of Seville, the Marriage of Figaro, the Guilty Mother.* Translated by David Coward. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. A translation of all three of Beaumarchais's "Figaro" plays, with an in-depth introduction that includes biographical information about Beaumarchais and extensive historical contextualization of his works.

Osborne, Richard. *Rossini: His Life and Works.* 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. A scholarly biography of Rossini that considers the man, the myth, and the music in an accessible and engaging way.

ONLINE

The Barber of Seville: Special Donkey-cam Video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVRj6FlybGE>)

The Met's own Sir Gabriel, the donkey appearing in *The Barber of Seville*, wore a GoPro to a dress rehearsal and recorded his work as an artist for the Metropolitan Opera.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia in Rehearsal (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evPteqxIL2I>)

The Metropolitan Opera gives you an insider's view into a rehearsal of *The Barber of Seville* in its 2014-15 season, featuring Isabel Leonard and Christopher Maltman.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia: Sir Gabriel the Donkey (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5siag7TW0GU>)

Deborah Voigt interviews animal trainer Nancy Novograd and Sir Gabriel the Donkey, who stars in the Met's production of Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia: "Ah, il più lieto" with Lawrence Brownlee (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQ8-0uxLFe0>)

Lawrence Brownlee sings Count Almaviva's final aria from Act II.

act/scene

Acts and scenes are ways of categorizing sections of operas. An act is a large-scale division of an opera, and each opera will typically include from two to five acts. Acts can be subdivided into scenes, which are often differentiated by a change in setting or characters.

adagio

Literally "at ease," adagio is a tempo marking that indicates a slow speed. An adagio tempo marking indicates that the performer should play in a slow and leisurely style.

allegro

Italian for "cheerful" or "joyful," Allegro is the most common tempo marking in Western music, indicating a moderately fast to quick speed.

aria

A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra. In opera, arias mostly appear during a pause in dramatic action when a character is reflecting musically on his or her emotions. Most arias are lyrical, with a tune that can be hummed, and many arias include musical repetition. For example, the earliest arias in opera consist of music sung with different stanzas of text (strophic arias). Another type of aria, da capo arias, became common by the eighteenth century and feature the return of the opening music and text after a contrasting middle section. Nineteenth-century Italian arias often feature a two-part form that showcases an intensification of emotion from the first section (the cantabile) to the second section (the cabaletta).

articulation

The smoothness or hardness with which a note is begun and ended. Articulation is a way of indicating the degree to which each note connects to the next, and can be seen while watching the bow of a stringed instrument player. A note can be attacked sharply and made short, or it can flow smoothly into the next note.

baritone

Literally "deep sounding," a baritone is what a typical male voice sounds like—the term refers to a male singer with a low but not extremely low vocal range. A baritone will sing notes that are higher than those sung by a bass and lower than those sung by a tenor. Uncommon until the nineteenth century, baritone roles have grown in popularity in opera since the works of Verdi, who often reserved the voice type for villains.

baroque

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1600 to 1750. The beginning of the Baroque period coincides with the invention of opera as a genre, and its end coincides with the death of the composer Johann Sebastian Bach. The Baroque period saw the rise of modern tonality, an expansion of performing forces, and increased ornamentation. The term "baroque" means bizarre or exaggerated, and was used by critics in the Eighteenth century critics who preferred a simpler and less-ornamented style.

bass

The lowest sounding line in music. Bass also refers to the lowest singing range for the male voice. Opera composers often choose a bass voice to sing one of two opposite types of roles: comic characters or dramatic and serious characters. For example, Mozart and Rossini wrote comic parts for bass voice, using musical repetition and low register for comic effect. Wagner and Mozart wrote serious parts for bass voice, focusing on the gravity that a low register can contribute to the overall musical texture.

bel canto

Referring to the Italian vocal style of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, bel canto singing emphasizes lyricism and ornamentation in order to showcase the beauty of the singer's voice. Its focus on lyrical embellishment directly contrasts with a contemporary Germanic focus on a weighty, dramatic style. Bel canto singing is most closely associated with the music of Gioachino Rossini, Vincenzo Bellini, and Gaetano Donizetti.

cadenza

An ornamented musical elaboration played in a free style by a soloist to display his or her virtuosity. Cadenzas are typically improvised—that is, created by a performer on the spot—though they can also be written out in advance. They most frequently occur near the end of a piece, at a point of harmonic tension when the piece is about to conclude.

chorus

A section of an opera in which a large group of singers performs together, typically with orchestral accompaniment. Most choruses include at least four different vocal lines, in registers from low to high, with multiple singers per part. The singers are typically from a particular group of people who play a certain role on stage—soldiers, peasants, prisoners, and so on. Choruses may offer a moral or commentary on the plot, or participate in the dramatic action.

Classical

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1750 to 1830, bordered by the earlier Baroque period and the later Romantic period. Contrasting with the ornamentation common to the preceding Baroque period, Classical music is characterized by simple and elegant melodies, regular harmonic accompaniment, and contrasts between melodic themes. The composers most closely associated with the Classical period include Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven.

coloratura

A rapid and elaborate ornamentation by a solo singer, particularly common in operas of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Requiring vocal agility and a wide and high range, coloratura showcases the virtuosity of a singer by featuring repeating melodic figures, rapid scales, trills, and other embellishments.

conductor

The person who directs the orchestra, setting the tempo, giving interpretive directions to the musicians, and generally holding all the musical elements of a performance together. In orchestra performance, the conductor typically stands on a podium in front of the players and uses a baton to communicate the meter and tempo, and his or her non-baton hand to indicate dynamics, phrasing, and articulation to the musicians. The gestures of a conductor can be likened to a non-verbal language that the musicians understand.

contralto

A deep female voice, with a vocal range that extends lower than that of a mezzo-soprano. Contraltos are known for having a very wide range and for the power and depth of sound with which they can sing. As is the case for roles for basses, many of the earliest roles in opera for contraltos are comic roles, though nineteenth-century composers also wrote dramatic roles for female singers with a lower range.

crescendo

A gradual raising of volume in music achieved by increasing the dynamic level. When music crescendos, the performers begin at a softer dynamic level and become incrementally louder. One of the most famous types of crescendos in opera, the Rossini crescendo, includes an increase in volume together with repeating melodic and rhythmic phrases, higher instrumental registers, and the gradual addition of instruments in order to create a particularly dramatic effect.

diminuendo

A gradual lowering of volume in music achieved by decreasing the dynamic level. During a diminuendo, the performers begin at a louder dynamic level and become incrementally softer.

dynamics

A musical trait pertaining to loudness and softness. During the eighteenth century, composers began indicating their desired intensity of volume in music by writing words such as piano (soft) and forte (loud) into the musical score. Dynamics encompass a spectrum from pianissimo (very soft) to piano (soft) to mezzo piano (moderately soft), all the way up to fortissimo (very loud). Music can shift to another dynamic level either suddenly or gradually, through a crescendo or diminuendo.

ensemble

A musical piece for two or more soloists, accompanied by orchestra. Types of ensembles include duets (for two soloists), trios (for three soloists), and quartets (for four soloists). Sometimes singers will respond directly to one another during an ensemble. At other times, singers will each sing to themselves as if the other singers were not on stage. In ensembles, multiple characters may simultaneously express very different emotions from one another.

finale

The last portion of an act, a finale consists of several musical sections that accompany an escalating dramatic tension. Finales frequently consist of multiple ensembles with different numbers of characters. When it occurs at the end of an early act in the opera, a finale may create a messy situation—and the resolution of this situation will only happen in subsequent acts. One type of finale common in comic operas, a chain finale, features characters entering or exiting from the stage to create unexpected combinations of characters, in turn increasing the opera's dramatic tension.

forte

Meaning "loud" or "strong" in Italian, forte is a dynamic level in music that indicates a loud volume. Adding the suffix "-issimo" to a word serves as an intensifier—since forte means "loud," fortissimo means "very loud."

harmony

The simultaneous sounding of pitches to produce chords, and the relationship between different chords as they succeed one another. Throughout much of Western music, systems of rules govern these progressions to help create our sense of musical tension, expectation, and conclusion. Tonal harmony is based on progressions of chords in relationship to a tonic (or home) key. In the 19th century, as composers sought novel sounds to reflect the originality of their invention, they began to employ chords and progressions of greater dissonance and greater distance from the home key. As such dissonances moved beyond mere sound effects into the musical structure itself, the traditional theory of tonal harmony began to become insufficient as a way to understand and describe musical structure.

intermission

A break between acts of an opera. At the beginning of an intermission, the curtain will fall (that is, close) on stage, and the lights in the auditorium, called the house lights, will become brighter. Intermissions provide audiences with a chance to walk around, talk with one another, and reflect on what they have seen and what could happen next. The break in the performance may also correspond with a change of time or scene in the story of the opera—the next act may take place hours or months later, or be set in a different location. Usually lights will dim and a bell may sound to indicate that the intermission is drawing to a close and the opera is about to resume.

legato

A type of articulation in which a melody is played with smooth connection between the notes. A legato passage does not include any pauses between notes or any accents at the beginnings of notes, as the notes blend into one another without a break. In contrast, a passage that is played staccato features notes played in a separated manner.

Leitmotif

From the German for “leading motive,” a leitmotif is a recurring musical idea, or motive, that represents a particular person, object, idea, emotion, or place. This musical idea is usually a few seconds in length and can occur in the music’s melody, harmony, rhythm, or a combination of the three. Leitmotifs are most closely associated with the operas of Richard Wagner, where they are used repeatedly throughout the opera to provide unity; they also less frequently appear in operas of other composers, including Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Strauss.

libretto

The text of an opera, including all the words that are said or sung by performers. Until the early eighteenth century, a composer would frequently set music to a pre-existing libretto, and any given libretto could thus be set to music multiple times by different composers. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, collaboration between the author of the libretto, known as the librettist, and the composer became more frequent. Some opera composers, most notably Richard Wagner, are known for writing their own text.

maestro

A title of respect used to address a conductor. The term is often applied to conductors with several decades of experience. However, performers often use this honorific when addressing the conductor.

melody

A succession of pitches that form an understandable unit. The melody of a piece consists of the tune that a listener can hum or sing. During arias, the singer will usually sing the main melody, though other instruments may play parts of the melody. Sometimes, such as during ensembles, multiple melodies can occur simultaneously.

mezzo-soprano

A female voice with a range between that of a contralto and soprano. A mezzo-soprano’s voice is slightly deeper than that of a soprano, so mezzo-sopranos are often cast in supporting roles as older women, including nurses, confidantes, or maids.

opera buffa

A term applied to Italian comic operas from the mid-eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries. The plot of an opera buffa often features scenes and characters from everyday life and addresses a light or sentimental subject, concluding with a happy ending.

opera seria

An eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Italian opera employing a noble and serious style. The plot of an opera seria often upholds morality by presenting conflicting emotions such as love versus duty, or by modeling enlightened rulers.

operetta

Featuring spoken dialogue, songs, and dances, an operetta is a short theatrical piece. Shorter in duration than operas, operettas typically feature a light subject matter, incorporate melodies composed in a popular style, and feature spoken dialogue. Most popular from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, the genre is the precursor of the American musical.

ornamentation

An embellishment to the melody, rhythm, or harmony of music, intended to make a melody more expressive or ornate. Ornamentation can be either indicated through symbols written into the music or improvised by the performer.

overture

An instrumental piece that occurs before the first act as an introduction to an opera. After the conductor enters the orchestra pit and takes a bow, the music for the overture begins. Most overtures are a few minutes in duration, and set the mood for the opera—even featuring musical themes that will occur later in the opera.

piano

Abbreviated p in a musical score, piano indicates a soft dynamic level. Musicians may achieve a piano sound by using less bow, less air, or less force. In opera, soft music will often correspond with emotions of sadness or moments in the plot when a character is reflecting on a course of action or emotional state. Pianissimo is “very soft,” and can be so quiet that an audience may need to listen carefully in order to discern its melody and harmony.

pitch

The quality of a musical sound corresponding to its perceived highness or lowness. Scientifically, pitch can be measured as the number of vibrations (or repetitions) of a sound wave per second, which is called its frequency. A sound with a low frequency, like a bass drum, will sound low and have a low pitch, while a sound with a high frequency, like a siren, will sound high.

prima donna

Meaning “first lady” in Italian, the prima donna is the leading female role in an opera. The term may apply to the role or to the singer herself, who usually sings in the soprano register and is the star of the show. Since the nineteenth century, the term has also been applied to a singer of any gender with a self-centered and demanding personality.

recitative

A type of vocal writing between speech and song that imitates the accents and inflections of natural speech. Composers often employ recitative for passages of text that involve quick dialogue and the advancement of plot, since the style allows singers to move rapidly through a large amount of text. Recitative may be accompanied either by keyboard or by the whole orchestra.

rhythm

Rhythm refers to the way music unfolds over time; it is a series of durations in a range from long to short. Along with pitch, it is a basic and indispensable parameter of music. Rhythm is perceived in relation to an underlying beat and within the context of a meter. Western musical notation indicates to the performer the exact duration of each note or rest.

Romantic

A period of music history lasting from approximately 1830 to 1900. Beginning in literature and later adopted by composers, romanticism reflected a newfound focus on individuality, nature, and emotional extremes. Music from the Romantic period often explores music’s redemptive power, focusing on the sublimity of nature, love, and the mysterious. Composers began to experiment with shortening and lengthening the standard forms and durations of musical works, and also added more expressive harmonies to convey the originality of their musical vision.

score

The complete musical notation for a piece, the score includes notated lines for all of the different instrumental and vocal parts that unite to constitute a musical composition. In an opera orchestra, the conductor follows the score during rehearsals and performances, while each performer follows his or her individual part.

Singspiel

Literally “sung play,” a Singspiel is an opera with spoken dialogue. Singspiels are typically in German and are from the Classical or early Romantic eras. The plot of a Singspiel is usually comic in nature, and its music may include songs, choruses, and instrumental numbers that are separated by spoken dialogue.

solo

A piece, musical passage, or line for a lone singer or other performer, with or without instrumental accompaniment. The most common type of solo in opera is the aria, which is composed for a single voice with orchestral accompaniment.

soprano

The highest singing range for the female voice. Roles composed for soprano singers are typically among the leading roles in the opera and require soprano singers to show off their virtuosic flexibility and range.

tempo

Literally “time” in Italian, tempo refers to the speed of a piece of music. Tempo is indicated in a score by a variety of conventional (often Italian) words—such as *allegro*, *adagio*, *vivace*, *moderato*, *grave*, and many more—that not only provide direction on the composer’s desired rate of speed, but also carry associations of gesture and character. For instance, *vivace* indicates not only a brisk speed but also a lively spirit. Additional tempo markings may indicate when a composer asks for a section of music to be sped up (such as “*accelerando*”) or slowed down (such as “*rallentando*”).

tenor

The highest natural male vocal range. By the nineteenth century, the tenor had become the most common vocal range for male leading roles in operas. Tenor roles often feature high-pitched notes for male voice in order to showcase the singer’s range and power. A related voice type is the countertenor, with a range above that of a tenor and similar to that of a contralto.

theme/motive

Themes are the melodic ideas that are musical building blocks for a piece. A theme is often recognizable as a distinct tune and may reappear in its original form or in altered form throughout the piece. A motif (or motive) is a brief musical idea that recurs throughout a musical work. Motives can be based on a melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic component, and their repetition makes them recognizable to the listener. In opera, musical motives are often symbolically associated with specific characters or dramatic ideas.

timbre

Pronounced TAM-bruh, a French word that means “sound color.” It refers to the complex combination of characteristics that give each instrument or voice its unique sound. Just as we can recognize each other by the differences in our speaking voices, operatic singing voices are distinguishable by their unique timbres. Listeners can also identify orchestral instruments by their timbre without being able to see them. The creative combination of different instrumental timbres is one of the artistic aspects of orchestration.

trill

A rapid alternation between two pitches that are adjacent to one another. Trills are a type of ornamentation, serving to embellish the melodic line, and appear regularly within coloratura passages. Trills also may appear near the end of a piece in order to prolong the musical tension before the music concludes.

verismo

A movement in Italian theater and opera in the late 19th century that embraced realism and explored areas of society previously ignored on the stage: the poor, the lower-class, and the criminal. Its characters are driven by passion to defy reason, morality, and the law. In order to reflect these emotional extremes, composers of verismo opera developed a musical style that communicates raw and unfiltered passions. Musically, verismo operas react against the forced ornamentation of the *bel canto* style and instead emphasize a more natural setting of the text to music. Before its exploration on the operatic stage, the verismo aesthetic first developed within the realm of literature.

January 6, 2017

Conducted by Maurizio Benini

Reviewed by _____

THE STARS:	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
Peter Mattei as Figaro	*****	
Pretty Yende as Rosina	*****	
Javier Camarena as Count Almaviva	*****	
Maurizio Muraro as Dr. Bartolo	*****	
Mikhail Petrenko as Don Basilio	*****	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
Count Almaviva serenades Rosina			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Figaro arrives singing			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Rosina drops a note			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Count Almaviva sings that he is "Lindoro"			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Figaro hatches a plan			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Rosina writes a letter			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Don Basilio suggests slander			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
Figaro reveals to Rosina that "Lindoro" loves her			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Bartolo is suspicious of Rosina			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
The drunken soldier arrives			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
The police arrive and there is great confusion			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
"Don Alonso" arrives			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Rosina's singing lesson			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Figaro comes to shave Dr. Bartolo			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Don Basilio arrives and is bribed to leave			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Figaro shaves Dr. Bartolo and Don Alonso's disguise is revealed			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
The old housekeeper comments on the madness			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
A storm			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Count Almaviva reveals his identity to Rosina			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Don Basilio arrives with the notary			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
Count Almaviva's big song			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
The grand finale			
My opinion of this scene:	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5