

# The Figaro Project

Directed by Jean Randich

May 2, 3, 4, 2008

8pm

LESTER MARTIN THEATRE

Mozart, Da Ponte, and Overmyer adapt Beaumarchais' *The Marriage of Figaro*

Beaumarchais' THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO adapted by Eric Overmyer, and interludes from  
Mozart's LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

CAST:

Figaro: Tyler Twombly  
Susanna: Raphaela Rose Primus  
Cherubino: Kevin Lackaff-Gilligan  
Count: Tom Shoemaker  
Countess: Molly Tarlov  
Antonio: Noel Kanalley  
Pedrillo: Josh Gulotta  
Fanchette: Allison Zajac-Battell  
Peasants and Shepherdesses: The Ensemble

VOCALISTS:

Figaro: Danny Brylow  
Susanna: Raphaela Rose Primus  
Cherubino: Sarah King  
Count: Tom Shoemaker  
Countess: Rebecca Moulton

ARTISTIC STAFF:

Director: Jean Randich  
Music Director: Tom Bogdan  
Dramaturge: Katie Kierstead  
Fight Choreographer: Chris Edwards  
Technical Director: Mike Rancourt  
Assistant Director: Laura Elaine Allen  
Set Designer: Sue Rees  
Costume Designer: Jen Bennett  
Costume Designer: Emily Woods Hogue  
Lighting Designer: C. Webster Marsh  
Sound Designer: Travis Garrison  
Stage Manager: Abby Geoghegan  
Assistant Stage Manager: Olivia Murphy

RUNNING CREW:

Light Board Operator: Nick Haas  
Sound Board Operator: Marika Shyuroff  
Follow Spots: Cate Ludin and Kaarin Lysen  
Wardrobe: Cathy Skulnik, Matthew Denison, Karly Blasé  
Hair and Make-Up: Jen Bennett, Emily Woods Hogue, Max Wolkowitz, Kaitlin Tredway

Scene Shop Carpenters: Laura Elaine Allen, Jonathan Burklund, Keith Eyrich, Jen Funk, Katie Jackson, Katherine Perkins, Anthony Pinto, Emily Reid  
Scene Shop Lab Crew: Jane Burns, Aisha Cruse, Ileasa Green, Jami Marshall-Lively, Denise McLean, Caitlin Orner, Maren Patrick, Ed Pisari, Rhea Rhiley, Brian Schultis, Tom Shoemaker, Paul Spaeth, Amanda Vorce, Max Wolkowitz  
Costume Shop Lab Crew: Morgan Whitaker, Laura Elaine Allen, Renee Gavitt, Allie Polubiec, Talyah Alpen, Emma Harden.  
Electrics Crew: Tina Oza, Lindsey Anderson, Annabelle La Mieux, James Burtis, Jessa Brown, Emma Connor, Katherine Perkins

# THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

## **Scene I: A sparsely decorated bedroom**

**Aria:** *Non so piu cosa son, cosa faccio*

Cherubino may be a “randy little rabbit,” but as he explains to Susanna in this aria, he simply can’t help himself. Any woman sets this boy’s breast aflame- just the simple word love is enough to send him into a pubescent frenzy.

## **Scene II: The Countess’s Quarters**

**Aria:** *Porgi, amor, qualche ristoro*

Having lost the love of her husband the Count, the Countess Almaviva expresses her heartbreak. Her message is simple but gravely clear: If she can’t regain his love, she would rather die.

## **Scene III: The Count in the castle**

**Aria:** *Hai gia vinta la causa*

The Count wants to take advantage of his right to spend the night with Susanna before her wedding, but it seems that everyone has conspired to foil his plans and make a fool of him. Infuriated, the Count vows that he will not be bested by his wily servants.

• Intermission (ten minutes) •

## **Scene IV: A gallery decorated for the wedding**

**Aria:** *The Letter Duet*

The Countess wishes to prove the Count’s unfaithfulness and punish him for his jealousy. Posing as Susanna, she dictates a letter inviting the Count to a secret rendezvous that night in the garden beneath the big chestnut trees.

## **Scene V: A chestnut grove in the garden**

**Aria:** *Tutto e disposto*

Figaro thinks that Susanna has finally succumbed to the Count’s advances. Believing he’s been betrayed, the wounded Figaro lashes out against those most conniving, deceitful of all creatures: Women!

**Aria:** *Giunse alfin il momento*

Susanna has cause to celebrate: The moment has finally arrived for the bride and groom to consummate their love. In this final aria, Susanna beckons Figaro to come to her arms.





Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

### **An Interrogation**

OFFICER: Step forward. Your name?

FIGARO: Figaro.

OFFICER: Occupation?

FIGARO: Valet to His Highness, the honorable Count Almaviva.

OFFICER: Date of birth?

FIGARO: Unknown.

OFFICER: What does that mean?

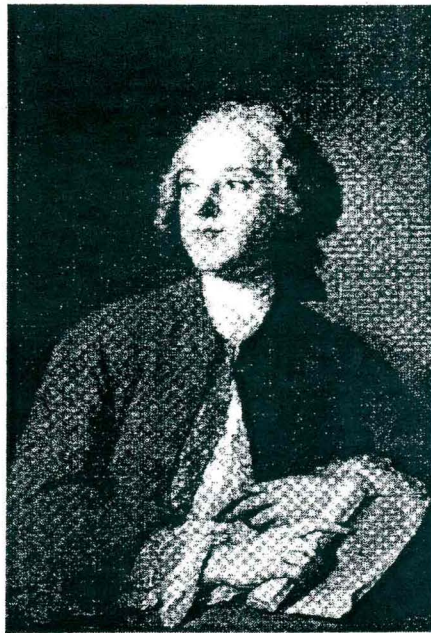
FIGARO: I'm a foundling.

OFFICER: And your approximate age?

FIGARO: No idea .....

THIRD GUARD: So you flirted with the revolution?

FIGARO: I never flirt, Gentlemen, I'm proud to say, I was the first servant anywhere to tell his master the truth.



Pierre-Augustin de Beaumarchais

### **The Big Riddle**

FIGARO: We're living at a moment—at a juncture in time when the junctures are more important than the people. Sadly! What is it that is always sought after, never found, and yet is always being lost?

ANTONIO: A big riddle?

FIGARO: Yes, a big riddle.

FANCHETTE: Always sought after, never found, and yet always being lost—what is that?

FIGARO: Humanity.

# *A Day of Madness, or, The Marriage of Figaro*

Louis XVI: *"The Bastille would have to be pulled down before such a play could be staged."*

Danton: *"Figaro killed off the nobility."*

Napoleon: *The Marriage of Figaro is "the revolution in action."*

Beaumarchais's *Figaro* plays have gripped the imagination of people as disparate as Marie Antoinette, who played the Countess in private performances, to the Looney Tunes animators who rendered the wily Bugs Bunny in their version of *The Barber of Seville*. The French King Louis XVI declared *The Marriage of Figaro* execrable and declared it would never be staged. He was particularly outraged by Figaro's infamous Act V monologue wherein Beaumarchais's personal ire explodes the form, and the servant challenges the master: "What have you done to earn those blessings? Took the trouble to be born: Beyond that you ain't much."

Outside the select court circle most of the French populace were starving. When the Comedie Francaise finally was allowed to produce *The Marriage of Figaro* on 27 April 1784, the blood-edged guillotine of the French Revolution was just 5 years down the road. Even though Figaro's dark night of the soul may have been Beaumarchais's, echoing personal details from the beleaguered entrepreneur's life, the frustration at an eternally inequitable society was pure pre-revolutionary rage. In Vienna, a German language version of the scandalous play was prohibited, but it caught the attention of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and his librettist, Lorenzo Da Ponte. They knew a good story when they saw one, and what to cut to get it by the censors. They worked feverishly, even composing book scenes, arias, and music simultaneously, insuring the quick spark of impulse and action. Working for about six weeks in October and November of 1785, Mozart finished most of the score. The revolution was dropped, but the spirit of the revolt of the servants against the masters remained.

With *The Figaro Project* we are letting these Figaros talk to each other. We have used the first act of yet another adaptation, Eric Overmyer's *Figaro/Figaro*, in which he melds Beaumarchais and Odon von Horvath's later play, *Figaro Gets a Divorce*. We've interpolated Mozart's arias-- pure, clear windows into the characters' secret longings, to punctuate and deepen the fast-paced action of the Beaumarchais play. We have enjoyed asking ourselves Figaro's unanswered questions: "Why should these events happen to me? Who made me responsible? What is me?" From red noses, to shepherdesses' bonnets, to cloaks and masks, identity seems to be fluid, permeable, up for grabs. Is it really only in the darkness of the night, in the topsy-turvy world of madness where the servant is master and the maid is mistress, where pride is humbled, that humanity can flicker, and, for a moment, be found?

Jean Randich, Director, May 2008



## Notes from the Dramaturg

When Figaro tells us in Act V, "I've been everything, done everything," this is the playwright, Beaumarchais, telling us the story of his life. Having followed in his father's footsteps as a humble but successful clock maker, Beaumarchais invented a new escapement mechanism for watches, which earned him not only a patent for his clever design, but enough money to move among the rich and powerful. In 1754, Beaumarchais made his first appearance at court. After mounting a watch on a ring for Madame de Pompadour, he caught the eye of Louis XV, whose daughters he instructed to play the harp. He entered into many lucrative business ventures alongside his friend Joseph Paris-Duverney which catapulted him even higher into the echelons of fame and fortune. In 1760, he was able to purchase the office of secretary-councillor to the King.

But although Beaumarchais had become a nobleman, his heart remained always with the common people. For instance, under the support of Louis XVI he founded a commercial enterprise to support the American rebels with weapons and provisions during the American Revolution. Shortly after the death of Voltaire, many of whose works had been banned by the French censors, Beaumarchais set out to rescue Voltaire's oeuvre from oblivion: he purchased the rights to Voltaire's manuscripts, compiled a seventy-volume collection of his works and published them with his own money, in Germany to avoid the censors. Although this endeavor was a financial failure for Beaumarchais, if it were not for his valiant effort, many of Voltaire's works would be lost to us.

This rebellious spirit, dedication to art and liberty, and the passionate belief in man's right to individual expression pervade Beaumarchais's works. *The Marriage of Figaro* is more than just a brilliant farce written in the well established tradition of 18th century high comedy. In this second of the trilogy of iconic *Figaro* plays, Beaumarchais dared to challenge the injustices of a rigid class system by creating a comedy in which the lowly servants are sometimes more clever and shrewd than their masters. Beaumarchais's work gave an unashamedly outraged voice to the proletariat years before the French Revolution finally broke out. The impassioned and comprehensive list of complaints Figaro makes in his famous Act V monologue, with its frank criticisms of the aristocracy, incensed his royal cohorts. Consequently, the play was only released after a long bout with the censors. The fluidity of sexuality and gender in the play was equally threatening to the status quo, and is provocative even today when gender ambiguity is still considered taboo. The erotic charge that runs through the play transcends the boundaries of gender, age, and social class.

In *The Marriage of Figaro*, Beaumarchais proves that sometimes the best way to confront the injustices perpetuated by the society is to laugh at them and to reduce them to farce. *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Mozart's operatic adaptation of Beaumarchais's stage comedy, preserves all the light-hearted theatrical zeal of the original work. However, the beauty and poignancy of Mozart's arias contribute a palpable emotional weight that perfectly counterbalances Beaumarchais's levity. *The Figaro Project* is an adaptation of *The Marriage of Figaro* in which Mozart's arias meet Beaumarchais's prose. In this dialogue of words of song, we discovered that the two have much to share with each other. While Beaumarchais and Mozart were two very different artists, what they offer us through their respective versions of *Figaro* is a fun-house mirror held up to society in which even modern audiences will recognise themselves. They encourage us to laugh at human folly as much as to consider just what we are laughing at, and to keep mindful that revolution is in the air.

Emma Goldman once said "a revolution without dancing is not worth having," but I am sure that Beaumarchais and Mozart would agree.

~ Katie Kierstead, dramaturg

SPECIAL THANKS  
To all who helped with the celebration



BENNINGTON COLLEGE DRAMA FACULTY & STAFF

CHRIS EDWARDS  
KATHLEEN DIMMICK  
MICHAEL GIANNITTI  
LINDA HURLEY  
KIRK JACKSON  
DINA JANIS  
SHERRY KRAMER  
DANIEL MICHAELSON  
ROBERT POST  
MICHAEL RANCOURT  
JEAN RANDICH  
SUE REES  
JENNY ROHN  
TERRY TEITELBAUM  
JOHN WALCH  
JANIS YOUNG



poster and program design by Andrew Barton