

The Marriage of Figaro

by Mozart & Da Ponte

in a new adaptation by Joseph P Winters

Estate of Emergency

thoughts on The Marriage of Figaro by Joseph P Winters, Director and Manager of FMC

It could be tempting to think that this comic opera is nothing more than a summer treat, a piece of Mozartian patisserie, a sugary musical meringue. And yet, there is a deeper political undercurrent to this farce: Napoleon proclaimed that *The Marriage of Figaro* was “the revolution already in action,” being composed only three years before the French peasantry executed their feudal masters. The opera takes place in a frenetic ‘state of emergency’ both in the sense that all the characters spend most of their time hurtling through a semi-permanent panic, but also because out of this chaos they *emerge* into a new, more civilised, society.

The opera begins at the start of a workday in the home of a wealthy politician and ends toward the next morning in his garden. One day in the life of a community is condensed into three tumultuous hours, moving from the indoor claustrophobia to the natural order of things outside. Over the course of this wild day, the characters are sent reeling from one raw-nerved entanglement to the next and are utterly transformed. The people we meet in the morning are not the same as those who stand together, facing a new dawn at the opera’s close. They have become strangers to themselves and must reconsider how they will go on treating each other when tomorrow comes.

The household is a microcosm of a society on the brink of radical change. It is a closed enclave of wealth where privilege is guarded and differences in social status are strictly delineated. The entire plot of *Figaro* circles around the infringement of the explicit dividing line between an affluent political class and a disenfranchised working class.

Over the course of the opera’s ‘crazy day’, the overflowing willpower of a cleaner and security guard transforms the community of the bourgeois townhouse, destabilizing its norms, and

threatening to tear it apart. Finally, as the story moves outside into the strange dreamscape of the final act, after all the disguises are removed and the masks torn away, the community stands – for a fleeting moment – as indistinguishable equals.

The master falls to his knees and in front of everyone begs forgiveness. The man who has the power of granting mercy must now plead for the mercy he has refused others. The power to pardon now lies with his wife and the community who take up her side. The resolution of this drama hangs on an unprecedented and tremendous act of forgiveness. It is a moment of sudden standstill that psychoanalyst Mladen Dolar calls “a sublime instant evoking eternity.” He concludes, as we have done whilst rehearsing this production, that although *The Marriage of Figaro* wears its politics lightly, it is nonetheless a call to arms. Dolar’s writing in *Opera’s Second Death* has underpinned how we have approached this wonderful drama:

‘Tutti contenti saremo cosi’ (Everyone will be happy now) – that is the emphatically condensed utopian moment of the bourgeois community, the moment of reconciliation and equality, the moment of liberté, égalité, fraternité. The revolution has already taken place, the master has already fallen to his knees to eventually become part of the community when the countess disguised as the servant grants him pardon. Three years later, the French Revolution merely has to dispose of the master’s empty shells. The master had already died onstage for everyone to see, and died all the more for not being killed but pardoned.

Synopsis

Act One

A Kensington townhouse, present day. In a storeroom that they have been allocated, Figaro and Susanna, security guard and cleaner to the Count and Countess, are preparing for their wedding. Figaro is furious when he learns from his bride that the Count, an MP recently made Foreign Secretary who has made public statements against harassment at work, has tried to seduce her. He's determined to have revenge on his master. Dr. Bartolo appears with his former housekeeper, Marcellina, who is equally determined to marry Figaro. She has a contract: Figaro must marry her or repay the money he borrowed from her. When Marcellina runs into Susanna, the two rivals exchange insults. Susanna returns to her room, and the Count's young work experience placement, Cherubino, rushes in. Finding Susanna alone, he speaks of his love for all the women in the house, particularly the Countess. When the Count appears, again trying to seduce Susanna, Cherubino hides. The Count then conceals himself when Basilio, the music teacher, approaches. Basilio tells Susanna that everyone knows Cherubino has a crush on the Countess. Outraged, the Count steps forward, but he becomes even more enraged when he discovers Cherubino and realizes that the boy has overheard his attempts to seduce Susanna. Just in time Figaro arrives with the entire cleaning staff assembled to sing the praises of their master in the hope that he will grant a wedding. Put on the spot, the Count is forced to bless the marriage of Figaro and Susanna. To spite them and to silence Cherubino, he orders the boy to join the army without delay. Figaro sarcastically sends Cherubino off into battle.

Act Two

In her bedroom, Rosina, the Countess, mourns the loss of love in her life. Encouraged by Figaro and Susanna, she agrees to set a trap for her husband: They will send Cherubino, disguised as Susanna, to a rendezvous with the Count that night. At the same time, Figaro will send the Count an anonymous note suggesting that the Countess is having an affair with another man. Cherubino arrives, and the two women lock the door before dressing him in women's clothes. When Susanna steps into an adjoining room, the Count knocks and is annoyed to find the door locked. Cherubino hides himself in the dressing

room, and the Countess lets her husband in. When there's a sudden noise from behind the door, the Count is skeptical of his wife's story that Susanna is in there. Taking his wife with him, he leaves to get tools to force the door. Meanwhile, Susanna, who has reentered the room unseen and observed everything, helps Cherubino escape through the window before taking his place in the dressing room. When the Count and Countess return, both are astonished when Susanna emerges from the room. Figaro arrives to begin the wedding festivities, but the Count questions him about the note he received. Figaro successfully eludes questioning until the gardener, Antonio, bursts in, complaining that someone has jumped from the window. Figaro improvises quickly, feigning a limp and pretending that it was he who jumped. As soon as Antonio leaves, Bartolo, Marcellina, and Basilio appear, putting their case to the Count and holding the contract that obliges Figaro to marry Marcellina. Delighted, the Count declares that Figaro must honor his agreement and that his wedding to Susanna will be postponed.

20 Minute Interval

Act Three

Later that day in the dining room, Susanna leads on the Count with promises of a rendezvous that night. He is overjoyed but then overhears Susanna conspiring with Figaro. In a rage, he declares that he will have revenge. The Countess, alone, recalls her past happiness. Marcellina, accompanied by a lawyer, Don Curzio, demands that Figaro pay his debt or marry her at once. Figaro replies that he can't marry without the consent of his parents for whom he's been searching for years, having been abducted as a baby. When he reveals a birthmark on his arm, Marcellina realizes that he is her long-lost son, fathered by Bartolo. Arriving to see Figaro and Marcellina embracing, Susanna thinks her fiancé has betrayed her, but she is pacified when she learns the truth. The Countess is determined to go through with the conspiracy against her husband, and she and Susanna compose a letter to him confirming the meeting with Susanna that evening in the garden. Cherubino, now dressed as a girl, appears with his sweetheart, Barbarina, the daughter of Antonio, hidden among the cleaning staff, who try to cheer up the Countess with flowers stolen from the garden. The ever-outraged gardener, Antonio, who has found Cherubino's cap, also arrives and reveals the young man. The Count is furious to discover that Cherubino has disobeyed him and is still in

the house. Barbarina punctures his anger, explaining that the Count, when he attempted to seduce her, promised her anything she desired. Now, she wants to marry Cherubino, and the Count reluctantly agrees. The household assembles for Figaro and Susanna's wedding. During the festivities, Susanna gets a note to the Count, sealed with a pin, confirming their tryst that evening.

Act Four

At night in the garden, Barbarina despairs that she has lost the pin the Count has asked her to take back to Susanna as a sign that he's received her letter. When Figaro appears, Barbarina accidentally tells him about the planned rendezvous between the Count and Susanna. Thinking that his bride is unfaithful, Figaro curses all women. He hides when Susanna and the Countess arrive, dressed in each other's clothes. Alone, Susanna sings of love. She knows that Figaro is listening and enjoys making him think that she's about to betray him with the Count. She then conceals herself—in time to see Cherubino try to seduce the disguised Countess. When the Count arrives looking for Susanna, he chases the boy away. Figaro, by now realizing what is going on, joins in the joke and declares his passion for Susanna in her Countess disguise. The Count returns to discover Figaro with his wife, or so he thinks, and explodes with rage. At that moment, the real Countess steps forward and reveals her identity. Ashamed, the Count asks her pardon. Ultimately, she forgives him, and the entire household celebrates the day's happy ending.

Thomas Gregory *Conductor*

Thomas Gregory graduated from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and received a Fellowship to study at the University of Michigan with Danis cellist Erling Blondal Bengtsson. He has performed all the major concertos, gives regular recitals, and is a current member of the Marmara piano trio. As well as conducting Fortismere Community Symphony Orchestra, he directs ensembles for the Haringey Music Service and teaches cello at the Centre for Young Musicians. Thomas is also the creator of the popular *Vamoosh* series of books for beginning string players.

Joseph P Winters *Director*

After studying English at the University of Cambridge on a choral scholarship, Joseph has made work in London and at the Edinburgh Fringe. As an assistant he has worked alongside Michael Longhurst (Artistic Director of the Donmar) and Natalie Abrahams (previously Artistic Director of the Gate Theatre and Associate Director of the Young Vic) as well as at the Royal Opera House, English National Opera and Mahogany Opera. His most recent project, *RUSH* by Willi Richards is Executive Produced by Stephen Daldry (previously Artistic Director of the Royal Court, and the Gate Theatre) and will transfer into the West End in 2020. Joseph is resident at the Almeida Theatre, where he specialises in adaptations and translations.

Christine Buras *Susanna*

Christine received her early musical education as a chorister at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, and later obtained her BA (with honours) in Music History and Theory from the University of Chicago and her Masters of Music at Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music Historical Performance Institute. Christine recently graduated from the postgraduate Vocal Studies course at the Royal Academy of Music. Upon graduation, she was awarded the DipRAM in recognition for excellence in her final recital. She is continuing her vocal studies with Julie Kennard and James Baillieu. Her operatic roles include Lucy (Menotti's *The Telephone*) for Salon Opera, Suor Dolcina and La Prima Sorella Cercatrice (Puccini's *Suor Angelica*) for Royal Academy Opera, Theodora (Handel's *Theodora*) for Benslow Opera, and Belinda (Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*) for Indiana University.

David Fletcher *Figaro*

David read music at the University of York, where he enjoyed a busy performing schedule. David now studies with Raymond Connell. Roles have included Figaro *Le nozze di Figaro*, Escamillo *Carmen*, Leporello *Don Giovanni*, Schaunard *La bohème*, Yakusidé *Madama Butterfly*, Montano (cover) *Otello* and Moralès (cover) *Carmen*, Fiorello *The Barber of Seville*, Cox Cox and Box, The Page *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Strephon *Iolanthe*, and Giuseppe *The Gondoliers*. David has sung in the chorus with Winslow Hall Opera, the Nederlandse Reisopera and Opera Holland Park. David is also a regular concert performer, having recently given recitals featuring Schubert's *Die schöne Müllerin*, Schumann's *Dichterliebe*, Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, and Vaughan Williams' *Songs of Travel*. David co-founded Dulwich Opera Company with Loretta Hopkins in 2014 to provide performance and development opportunities for young artists, as well as to promote opera as an artform to new audiences. Last year the company toured to ten venues across England with Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

Andrew Mayor *The Count*

Andrew Mayor was born in Manchester, and won a postgraduate scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music where he received various prizes. During his studies he sang Borilée in Rameau's *Les*

Borèades, conducted by Roger Norrington. At the 2002 Osterfestspiele in Salzburg Andrew was a soloist in Beethoven's Choral Fantasia at the Grossesfestspielhaus with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Claudio Abbado. Other recent rôles include Silvio I Pagliacci for Castleward Opera, The Vicar (Albert Herring), Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) and Ford (*Falstaff*), for English Touring Opera, the Count (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Rigoletto, Eugene Onegin and Renato in *Un Ballo in Maschera* all at the Holland Park Festival. He also covered Gunther in *Ring des Nibelungen* for Longborough Festival and sang Matthieu (Andrea Chenier) in the Queen Elizabeth Hall. In 2008 Andrew sang Starveling (*A Midsummer Nights Dream*) in the Linbury Theatre for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden conducted by Richard Hickox.

Loretta Hopkins *Countess*

Loretta studied at the University of Edinburgh and Birmingham Conservatoire and continues to train with Raymond Connell. In competition, Loretta was a finalist in Birmingham Conservatoire' Mario Lanza Prize and Vienna Conservatoire's Internationale Sommerakademie opera prize. Loretta co-founded Dulwich Opera Company (DOC) with David Fletcher to provide performance and development opportunities for young artists, as well as to promote opera as an artform to new audiences. Last year the company toured to ten venues across England with Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Opera roles include Violetta (cover) *La traviata*, Donna Anna (cover) *Don Giovanni* (Winslow Hall Opera); Mimi *La bohème*, Fiordiligi *Così fan tutte* (DOC); Lisa *The Queen of Spades* (Park Opera); Adina, *L'elisir d'amore* (Midland Opera); Micaela, *Carmen* (DOC and Opera at Bearwood); Kate Pinkerton, *Madama Butterfly* (Lambeth Orchestra); a Sprite *Fantastic Mr Fox* and *The Aunt Madama Butterfly* (Opera Holland Park). Future engagements include Violetta *La traviata* at the Grimeborn Festival.

Stephanie Leitner *Cherubino*

Stephanie sang her opera debut in 2010, performing the part of the 'First Lady' in Mozart's "Magic Flute" at Stadttheater Bad Hall, Austria. In 2009 she became member of Yehudi Menuhin's "Life – Music – Now" charity in Vienna, as soloist of the Baroque Ensemble "JASS – Antico". From 2005 to 2012 Stephanie was member of the stage chorus of the Bregenzer

Festspiele and worked with the conductors Urs Schirmer, Fabio Luisi and Carlo Rizzi, performing the chorus parts of 'Il Trovatore', 'Tosca', 'Aida' and 'André Chenier' at the Festspiele Bregenz. Since 2015 Stefanie is a member of "Clemens non Papa Consort" and performs on a regular basis with the group throughout London. Besides her appearance with the Consort, she does cover masses and art songs at the Parish St Barnabas, Earlsfield. When she is not busy training her voice, she travels around London teaching flute, piano, singing and the ukulele.

Manuela Schütte *Marcellina*

Manuela studied Singing at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London and continued her studies at Goldsmiths College, where she graduated with an MA in Music. She performs in a wide range of genres, including church music, concert and opera. She is also lead vocalist with the classical-folk group 'Mishaped Pearls', with whom she has appeared at the Cambridge Folk Festival, the BBC6 Music Festival and Southbank Centre.

Quentin Couradeau *Bartolo*

After studying Information Technology at Paris University, French bass-baritone Quentin Couradeau entered the *département supérieur pour jeunes chanteurs | le jeune chœur* at Paris Conservatoire where he studied with Yves Sotin and Laurence Equilbey, and was awarded a degree in Lyric Singing as well as in Choir Conducting. In 2015, he graduated with a Master degree in Vocal Performance from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London, where he was studying with David Pollard. Quentin is passionate about chamber music and has had the opportunity to work with famous conductors such as Bernard Tétu, John Nelson, Philippe Herreweghe and Eamonn Dougan, from The Sixteen. More recently, he was also a member of the Opera Holland Park Chorus, and sang in *La Cenerentola* (Rossini) and *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss II).

Peder Holtermann *Basilio*

Peder started singing in The Norwegian Broadcasting Boys Choir, aged six. After degrees in Law and Musicology in Oslo, he was a postgraduate student at the RCM, London and he was a founder member of St. Katherine's Singers. Roles include Tamino and Ferrando. Peder also

works as a freelance translator, and is a qualified Antigym®-practitioner.

Charlie-Jade Jones *Barbarina*

Charlie-Jade trained in Musical Theatre at the Royal Academy of Music. She graduated in 2015 with a Postgraduate Diploma in Musical Theatre. She has performed solo as a singer at the Royal Albert Hall, Winchester Cathedral and the Prince Edward Theatre in the West End, as well as performing with the BBC Concert Orchestra in BBC Radio 2's Friday Night is Music Night Christmas Spectacular and The Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra at Cadogan Hall in *Anything Goes*; A 50th Anniversary of the Music of Cole Porter. Theatre roles include; Lynette 'Squeaky' Fromme in *Assassins* and Dot in *Sunday in the Park with George*. This winter Charlie-Jade will join the cast of *Thursford Christmas Spectacular*.

Owain Evans *Antonio*

Welshman Owain Evans loved singing from a very young age. Now studying Opera performance at Morley College, he hopes to further his passion for vocal studies at University. Currently he runs a local health clinic in Backspace, where he works as principal chiropractor and manages a team of practitioners. He has a huge Bernese Mountain Dog called Lenny, (who's probably his biggest fan).

Chorus *Fortismere Community Choir*

Musical Director of FCC is Marvin L. Perrott

Fortismere Community Symphony Orchestra players

Violin 1

Sam Alberman *Leader*

Helen New

Nigel Brady

John Goudie

Celia Harding

Catherine Ford

Charlotte Cummings

Flute

Abigail Munson

Nick Lacey

Oboe

Mandy MacEwan

Sarah Brown

Bassoon

Julia Dobson

Philip Le Bas

Violin 2

Luke Waterfield

Angela Davies

Nadia Collins

Tibor Szemmelveisz

Laudan Nooshin

Rachel Hanger

Alice Ward

Daniel Smith

Adriana Beattie

Nicole Beattie

Clarinet

Rohan Stevenson

Judy Stevenson

Horn

Tom Sheldon

Adrian Norris

Trumpet

Dan Shafran

Viola

Deborah Young

Gill Tarlton

Yasmin Coleman

Matthew White

Bill Bott

Barnes Zeigler

Timpani

Richard Stoneman

Piano continuo

Paul Plummer

Cello

Jethro Herberg

Julie Spencer

Frances Winstone

Ben Hannam

Rachel Ellison

Raphael Herberg

Bass

Astrid Pfister

Creative and Production Team

W. A. Mozart

Composer

Lorenzo DaPonte

Italian Libretto

Joseph P Winters

Director & Adaptor

Thomas Gregory

Conductor & Musical Director

Marvin L. Perrott

Musical Director, Fortismere Community Choir

Assistant Director

Avigail Tlalim

Daniel Emery

Costume

Diane Winters

Set Construction

Paul Winters

Surtitle Operator

Kelly Lovelady

Surtitles provided by

Roger Graham, Digital-4

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Feel free to get in touch by email or phone and arrange a no obligation site visit.

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