

**OPERA WALKTHROUGH**  
**The Barber of Seville (1816)**  
**Gioachino Rossini (1792 – 1868)**

<b><u>Characters</u></b>	<b><u>Voice</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>
Count Almaviva	Tenor	A Spanish nobleman
Doctor Bartolo	Baritone	A doctor in Seville
Rosina	Soprano	Bartolo's ward
Figaro	Baritone	A barber in Seville
Don Basilio	Bass	Rosina's music teacher
Berta	Mezzo-Soprano	Bartolo's servant
Fiorello	Bass	Almaviva's servant

**Overture**

Trying to meet a deadline, Rossini lifted the now famous overture from one of his earlier serious operas. As a result, none of the themes in the overture are used in the opera.

**Act I - Scene 1 (morning)**

**A square in Seville near the balcony of Bartolo's house**

**1) Chorus** - Fiorello gathers a small group of musicians beneath the balcony at dawn so Count Almaviva can serenade Rosina.

**2) Aria - Almaviva** - Almaviva stands beneath Rosina's window and serenades her.

**3) Chorus** - Failing to get a response, Almaviva pays and dismisses the musicians, who make a lot of noise praising the Count's generosity as they leave. Almaviva and Fiorello try to keep them quiet.

**Recitative** - Fiorello complains that the musicians practically woke up the neighborhood. He leaves as Almaviva hears someone else coming and hides.

**4) Aria - Figaro** - Figaro enters and introduces himself as the Barber of Seville who is a jack-of-all trades that can provide many services.

**Recitative** - Figaro and Count Almaviva recognize each other. The Count says he is traveling in disguise and wants Figaro's help wooing Rosina whom he believes is Bartolo's daughter. Figaro explains that he is the barber, surgeon, botanist, apothecary, and more for Bartolo's house. He also reveals that Rosina is Bartolo's ward rather than his daughter.

Rosina steps out on the balcony followed by Bartolo, who asks Rosina about a piece of paper she is holding. She claims it is just the words to an aria from "The Useless Precaution". Purposely dropping the paper, she asks Bartolo to retrieve it. As he leaves the balcony, Almaviva retrieves the note and realizes it is in fact a message to him asking for his name and intentions.

Almaviva and Figaro hide as Bartolo exits the house, telling his servants that he intends to marry Rosina today and if Don Basilio should visit, he is to wait inside.

Figaro tells Almaviva that Don Basilio is Rosina's music teacher and also a priest who arranges marriages. Almaviva claims he will not reveal his name yet because he wants Rosina to fall in love with him and not his title. Figaro suggests that Almaviva try to serenade Rosina again now that Bartolo is gone.

**5) Aria - Almaviva** - concealing his identity, Almaviva calls himself Lindoro and professes his love for Rosina, who appears at the window of the balcony. Rosina urges Lindoro to continue, but eventually, a servant enters and she quickly closes the window.

Figaro and the Count decide they have to get inside. The Count promises to pay Figaro in gold if he can help him rescue and marry Rosina.

**6) Duet - Almaviva and Figaro** - Figaro explains the effect gold has on his devotion and creativity. He suggests the Count disguise himself as a soldier seeking lodging at the Doctor's house, but he must pretend to be drunk to divert suspicion. The plan set, the two men dream of their rewards, both financial and amorous.

Rossini combines Figaro's rapid staccato patten and the Count's long legato lines. As in most opera buffa traditions, the upper class is motivated by love and the working class is motivated by money.

## **Act I - Scene 2**

### **A room in Bartolo's house**

**7) Aria - Rosina** - Rosina details how she intends to win the heart of Lindoro. She is very loving and respectful, but if she is crossed, she is a viper who will make a man earn her love.

The aria begins with French Overture style motives both regal and demure to depict both aspects of Rosina's personality.

**Recitative** - Rosina writes another note to Lindoro hoping to find a way to deliver it. Figaro has snuck into the house and meets with Rosina. They discuss how she feels trapped and are about to discuss Lindoro when Bartolo approaches. Figaro hides, and

Bartolo asks Rosina about their conversation. Annoyed, Rosina leaves, and Bartolo reveals that the more he loves her, the more she dislikes him.

Don Basilio, Rosina's music teacher and Bartolo's marriage broker, enters and advises Bartolo of Almaviva's arrival and intention to marry Rosina. He suggests that Bartolo should slander Almaviva to drive him out of town.

**8) Aria - Don Basilio** - Basilio explains how slander starts as a little whisper and then slowly gathers force as the rumor spreads until it explodes with the power of a cannon.

Rossini uses the orchestra to emphasize the lyrics and hint at the storm that will arrive in force during the second act.

**Recitative** - Bartolo dismisses the plan and wants to do things his way by marrying Rosina. He and Basilio retire to draw up the marriage contract. Figaro emerges, having overheard the plan. He finds Rosina and tells her about Bartolo's intentions, then teases her about his knowledge of a young suitor in town who is in love.

**9) Duet - Rosina and Figaro** - When Rosina realizes that she is the object of Lindoro's affections, she asks Figaro to contact him. Figaro suggests sending a letter. Rosina reveals that she has already written Lindoro a letter, which makes Figaro realize that this woman overmatches him in cunning.

**Recitative** - Bartolo enters and asks Rosina what Figaro spoke to her about. She invents a story about Figaro's daughter Marcellina being ill. Bartolo calls out Rosina on the note she dropped from the balcony earlier.

**10) Aria - Doctor Bartolo** - Bartolo tells Rosina that he is much too smart to fall for her feminine deceptions and that he will keep her under house arrest.

**Recitative** - Berta enters as Bartolo and Rosina leave. She hears knocking and answers the door.

**11) Finale** - Almaviva enters disguised as a drunken soldier seeking lodging. Bartolo enters and tells him to leave. Rosina enters and the soldier identifies himself as Lindoro while Bartolo tries to find his certificate of exemption from billeting troops. Almaviva gets a note to Rosina as he challenges Bartolo to a duel. While occupied, Rosina switches the note for a laundry list. Berta and Don Basilio enter as Rosina bemoans her captivity. Almaviva threatens and chases Bartolo. Figaro enters and pleads calm saying that half the town is gathered outside because of the commotion. Almaviva and Bartolo continue to fight. The military shows up outside and demand entry. Once inside, the guard officer is mobbed with complaints and tries to arrest Almaviva, who privately identifies himself to the officer. The officer tells everyone to go about their business and much confusion ensues.

## **ACT II - Scene 1**

### **The music room in Bartolo's house**

**Recitative** - Doctor Bartolo believes the drunk soldier was sent by Almaviva to abduct Rosina. There is a knock at the door.

**12) Duet - Almaviva and Bartolo** - Almaviva arrives disguised as a music teacher, aggravating Bartolo with his constant greetings.

**Recitative** - Almaviva identifies himself as Don Alonso, Rosina's substitute music teacher, claiming that Don Basilio is sick. To convince the suspicious Bartolo, Don Alonso produces the note Rosina wrote to Lindoro and claims he can use the music lesson to show her that Almaviva is insincere. Bartolo is convinced and gets Rosina for her lesson. Rosina and Don Alonso, whom she recognizes as her Lindoro, begin their lesson.

**13) Duet - Rosina and Don Alonso** - Rosina sings an aria from "The Useless Precaution" as Bartolo falls asleep. Don Alonso assures Rosina that they will be together. Bartolo wakes up as Rosina finishes the aria.

**Recitative** - Bartolo claims music was better in his day and begins to sing an aria which he dedicates to Rosina. Figaro arrives to help distract Bartolo with his regular shave. Bartolo doesn't want it, but Figaro insists, knowing that he must steal the key to Rosina's window to help them free her later that night. Bartolo sends Figaro with the keys to retrieve the towels. There is a crash from the other room as Figaro drops some plates and glasses. When Bartolo goes to see what happened, Don Alonso proposes to Rosina, who accepts. Figaro and Bartolo return, and Figaro slips Rosina's key to Don Alonso.

**14) Quintet - Rosina, Don Alonso, Figaro, Bartolo, Basilio** - Don Basilio arrives and before Bartolo can get suspicious, Don Alonso, Rosina, and Figaro bribe Basilio to pretend that he has scarlet fever and should go home to bed.

**15) Quartet - Rosina, Don Alonso, Figaro, Bartolo** - With Basilio gone, Figaro gets back to shaving Bartolo, while Don Alonso tells Rosina the plan for her midnight escape. Bartolo overhears them despite Figaro's distractions and exposes Don Alonso as an imposter and he is chased away.

**Recitative** - Bartolo thinks Basilio knows something about what is going on and sends a servant to fetch him. Berta wanders in and Bartolo leaves to guard the door. She complains about working in Bartolo's house.

**16) Aria - Berta** - Berta sings about old men and young women, one a quiver, the other crazy, and how she herself cannot find a lover.

## **ACT II - Scene 2 (night)**

### **Rosina's room in Bartolo's house**

**Recitative** - Basilio returns and tells Bartolo that he has never heard of Don Alonso. Bartolo concludes that Don Alonso must have been sent by Almaviva to rescue Rosina. He decides to marry Rosina immediately and sends Basilio to get a notary. Bartolo decides to deceive Rosina using the letter Don Alonso gave him. Rosina enters and Bartolo gives her the letter claiming it is proof that Don Alonso and Figaro are planning to sell her to Count Almaviva. Rosina thinks Lindoro has betrayed her and agrees to marry Bartolo, telling him of the plan for her to elope at midnight. Bartolo goes to bolt all the doors and tells Rosina to lock herself in her room.

**INSTRUMENTAL** - The orchestra depicts a thunderstorm with various music and stage effects. During the tempest, Figaro and the Count sneak into Rosina's room through the window using a ladder outside.

The storm is a metaphor for Rosina's despair.

**Recitative** - Lindoro and Figaro find Rosina, who is furious at Lindoro for betraying her to the Count Almaviva, which causes Lindoro to admit that he is Count Almaviva, and that he loves her.

**17) Trio - Rosina, Almaviva, and Figaro** - Rosina and Almaviva tell each other how happy they are while Figaro tells the audience how talented he is for getting them together. Eventually, Figaro points out they need to leave quickly. Suddenly Figaro sees two people with a lantern approaching, and they try to escape through the window.

**Recitative** - The three discover that the ladder is gone and before they can flee, Basilio arrives with the notary. Figaro pretends to be Bartolo and tells the notary to marry Rosina and Almaviva. When Basilio tries to interfere, Almaviva offers him the choice of a ring or being shot. Basilio takes the ring and the notary marries Rosina to the Count using Figaro and Basilio as witnesses.

**18) Aria - Almaviva** -the Count summarizes the events with a showpiece aria.

The aria, "Cessa di più resistere", is often omitted due to its fiendishly difficult vibrato arpeggios, and also because it results in prolonging the ending.

**Recitative** - Bartolo enters with the officer and soldiers to arrest Lindoro, who identifies himself as Count Almaviva. Bartolo realizes that by removing the ladder, it hastened the marriage of Almaviva and Rosina. Bartolo admits his folly and accepts the situation as Figaro is paid by the Count for his services in helping him marry Rosina.

**19) Finale - Figaro and Chorus** - Figaro leads everyone in a brief chorus about love.