



Le nozze di Figaro – The Marriage of Figaro

by W. A. Mozart and Lorenzo da Ponte

Turner Sims, Southampton, Monday 28th February 2022 at 3.15

Arias and ensembles from Mozart's great opera, *Le nozze di Figaro* presented by all current classical voice students at the University of Southampton, covering years 1, 2, 3 and post-graduate.

Le nozze di Figaro is based on Beaumarchais' play *La folle journée, ou le Mariage de Figaro*, which opened in Paris in 1784. The play had caused a sensation. Written at a time of revolution, its subject matter – of servants rising up and outwitting their masters – outraged the aristocracy. This caused the play to be banned in many cities, including Vienna, where Mozart was based at the court of Emperor Joseph II.

In order to get permission from the Emperor to use such a controversial subject for a new opera, Mozart's librettist Da Ponte had to strip the play of some of its most provocative messaging.

Mozart may have drafted the music in just six weeks. Since its premiere in Vienna on 1 May 1786, directed by Mozart himself, *Le nozze di Figaro* has become among the most frequently performed operas worldwide.

Programme:

Overture on two pianos - David Owen Norris & Francesco Izzo

Cavatina – Se vuol ballare, signor Contino	Figaro - Hector Walker
Duetto – Via resti servita	Susanna – Shiyang Xu Marcellina – Chuyue Peng
Aria - Non più andrai	Figaro – Oliver Davis
Cavatina – Porgi amor	Countess – Amelia Kelly-Slogrove
Canzona – Voi, che sapete	Cherubino – Yishan Li
Aria - Venite inginocchiatevi	Susanna – Yangyi Mao
Duet - Aprite, presto aprite	Susanna – Charlotte Whysall Cherubino – Cheuk Gi Yeung
Duet – Crudel! Perché finora	Count - Oliver Davis Susanna – Huihui Lou
Sextet – Riconosci in questo amplesso	Susanna – Jin Zhou Marcellina – Zehui Gao Don Curzio – Adam Greenhow Count - Oliver Davis Bartolo - Hector Walker Figaro – Jonathan Ozanne
Aria – E Susanna non vien? ...Dove sono	Countess – Yuming Bi
Duet - Sull'aria	Susanna – Talitha Jones Countess – Alicia Holland Pillado
Cavatina - L'ho perduta	Barbarina – Qian Zhang
Aria - Deh vieni, non tardar	Susanna – Huihui Lou
Finale – Ed al suon di lieta marcia	Tutti

Musical director – Professor David Owen Norris

Language coach – Professor Francesco Izzo

Vocal coaching & narration - Jeffrey Lloyd-Roberts & Jenny Samuel

Narration:

It's Susanna and Figaro's wedding-day, and Figaro's busy measuring the new room the Count has given them in the castle. 'Nice of the Count to give us this handy room', says Figaro. 'Just between his room and your ladyship's. How convenient if she should call you in the night.'

Susanna sighs. He can't be that naïve, surely? And she explains to Figaro that if he gets sent off on an errand, it'll be quite convenient too for the Count to pay her an unauthorised visit.

Light dawns, and Figaro sings: 'If you want to dance, Mr. Count, I'll play the tune. Two can play at that game.'

Aria: Se vuol ballare

Figaro and Susanna leave and Marcellina and Bartolo enter. They intend to stop the wedding from happening – Marcellina the elderly former governess to the Countess has lent Figaro a sum of money, which if Figaro can't pay back, he must marry Marcellina, and she has a document to prove it.

Susanna returns but Marcellina pretends not to see her and says nasty things about her knowing she will overhear. When they both try to leave by the same door they both try out-do each other with politeness, but it quickly descends into bitchy remarks. Susanna wins this spat by gleefully teasing Marcellina about her age.

Duet: Via resti servita

Having seen Marcellina off, in comes Cherubino, the page-boy with raging hormones. He's in love with all the women in the castle, especially the Countess. That'll be why the Count dismissed him that morning, when he found him in Barbarina's bedroom! Heavens, here is the Count! Hide! says Susanna and pushes Cherubino behind a chair.

In comes the Count. Aha! Susanna all alone. And the Count begins to make the most of his opportunities. But they hear a voice outside. It's Don Basilio, the music master and a terrible gossip. The Count springs behind the same chair – Cherubino scrambles out just in time, sits in the chair – and Susanna throws a tablecloth over him.

In comes Basilio, and in no time he's asking Susanna what she thinks about Cherubino's affair with the Countess. Out comes the Count!

What?? That Cherubino! Only this morning I went into Barbarina's bedroom and there he was, hiding under a tablecloth, just – like – this one!! Cherubino here too! 'I thought I fired you?' says the Count. Off to the army with you!

Figaro teases Cherubino with the terrible things that'll happen to him when he joins the army. No flirting with the sergeant-major! Short back-and-sides. Endless marching. Military honour, but very little money.

Aria: Non piu andrai.

Act Two begins with the Countess alone in her boudoir. She is sad. Her husband no longer loves her. God of Love, now let me die.

Aria: Porgi, amor, qualche ristoro

Figaro's had an idea. Susanna will make a rendez-vous with the Count. But her place will be taken by Cherubino, dressed up as a woman. The Countess isn't sure about this, but just then in comes Cherubino, with a love-song that he's composed all by himself. He's overwhelmed when the Countess asks him to sing it – to HER!! He can scarcely sing for nerves.

Aria: Voi che sapete che cosa è amor

Just in case they are disturbed, Susanna locks the bedroom door, and to see if Figaro's plan might work, helps Cherubino to put on one of the Countesses dresses.

Aria: Venite, inginocchiatevi

There is a sudden loud knock at the door, oh no, it's the Count! Why is his wife's bedroom door locked? Who's in there?

He mustn't find Cherubino, so Susanna quickly locks him into the dressing room and hides herself before the countess lets the count in.

The count demands to know who is behind the locked dressing room door. The Count goes off to find a crowbar to open the door, taking his wife with him and locking the bedroom door behind them.

Susanna quickly lets Cherubino out of the closet. He must get away – the count will kill him if he finds him! The door's locked. How to get away? The window... Don't do it, says Susanna, we're too high up, but Cherubino jumps out anyway.

Duet: Aprite, presto aprite

When the Count and countess return they are amazed to find Susanna alone. Figaro appears and asks that the wedding ceremony happens a.s.a.p, however Marcellina turns up with Bartolo and Basilio to insist that Figaro must marry her. Seeing a chance to foil Figaro's plans, the Count promises to look at the contract.

Act Three begins with Susanna visiting the Count's room to borrow the smelling-salts for her mistress.

'Why are you so cruel to me?' asks the Count. 'Meet me in the garden. You won't fail me?'

Susanna sees her chance to put the Cherubino disguise plan into action and extract money from the Count to pay Figaro's debt to Marcellina. Though she's so nervous about stringing the Count along, that she keeps getting her Yesses and Noes in the wrong place!

Duet: *Crudel perché finora*

The judge Don Curzio has looked at Marcellina's contract – it's clear - Figaro must pay up or marry her. "But I can't marry Marcellina without my parent's permission" says Figaro. Well, where are they? I don't know, I was stolen from them as a baby. Stolen? Says Marcellina. Do you have a birth mark on your right arm? Yes, how did you know? Good heavens, it's him! My long lost baby boy! I'm your mother! Susanna arrives and sees Figaro embracing Marcellina. She's furious until she learns that Marcellina is his mother and Bartolo is his father. The contract is now void, much to the disgust of the Count and Don Curzio.

Sextet

Now the Countess is alone. Susanna has had an even better plan. The Count expects to be canoodling with Susanna that evening. Better than fooling him with Cherubino in disguise, what if the Countess dresses up as Susanna to trap her erring spouse?

'Can I really conspire with a servant like this?' the Countess asks herself. 'Exchange clothes with her, pretend to be each other under cover of darkness? Look what my wretched husband has brought me to. Where have the days gone when he loved me? I'll not stand it!'

Aria: *Dove sono i bei momenti*

The Countess dictates a letter for Susanna to send the Count saying how lovely the air will be in the pine grove this evening. And the rest he'll understand. The letter is sealed with a pin.

Duet: *Sull'aria*

Having found their long lost son Marcellina and Bartolo decide that they too should marry, so the act ends with a double wedding.

The last Act takes place in the sultry Spanish night and opens with Barbarina searching for a pin that the Count gave her to return to Susanna.

Aria: *L'ho perduta*

Barbarina explains the whole story to Figaro. 'And to whom are you taking the Count's reply?' he asks. Susanna!! Figaro didn't know about that.

Barbarina disappears into the bushes to wait for Cherubino, then in come Susanna and the Countess, dressed in each other's clothes – though it's so dark it's very hard to tell. Susanna sings of the beautiful night, and how she's looking forward to meeting her lover. She knows Figaro's listening, and she knows he's in the dark, both literally and figuratively. But a little jealousy never did anyone any harm – did it?

Aria: Deh vieni, non tardar

And Susanna goes off and hides in the bushes too. The Count appears and grabs the woman dressed as Susanna and gets to work. Into the bushes!

Figaro thinks it is Susanna and can't bear it any longer. With absolutely everyone in the bushes by now, he rushes out and utters a mighty oath. Susanna – dressed as the Countess – replies, and he starts to pour out his troubles to what must be a sympathetic ear, when he suddenly realizes that this is Susanna!

They begin the canoodle of all canoodles, apparently the Countess carrying on outrageously with her husband's valet.

Out of the bushes bounds the Count, calling on all to witness his wife's infidelity. He drags everyone out of the bushes and berates the supposed Countess soundly.

Suddenly there's someone behind him. Isn't that Susanna, coming out from the bush where he left her? Heavens, no it's not. It's his wife!

And all the Count can do is humbly beg for pardon, and be forgiven, before everyone sings a rousing finale.

Finale