



# THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART  
LORENZO DA PONTE

ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY AMANDA HOLDEN

## SOUVENIR PROGRAMME





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# THE GATEHOUSE A Short History

Of all the inns and pubs in Highgate, The Gatehouse is probably the oldest. Its nineteenth century owners claimed that there had been a licensed building on the site since 1337, although nothing can be proven as licensing by justices did not commence until 1552. At that time there were five inns licensed in Highgate although none of them were actually named. The earliest mention of The Gatehouse, in the licensing records, is 1670 when an Edward Cutler made an application to the borough of St. Pancras.

One curious fact about The Gatehouse was that the borough boundary between Middlesex and London ran through the building. When the hall was used as a courtroom, a rope divided the sessions to make sure prisoners didn't escape to another authority's area. The boundary problem continued as the names changed, most recently with Camden and Haringey sharing the building.

In 1993 the border was moved a few feet to allow one licensing authority overall control and The Gatehouse is now the most northerly pub in Camden.

From its days next to the toll gate, through its use as a Meeting House, The Gatehouse has had a chequered history. Byron, Cruikshank and Dickens all used its services and the Highgate Literary and Scientific Institution's inaugural meeting took place in the pub on 16th January 1839.

At the turn of the twentieth century, The Gatehouse was famous all over London for its "shilling ordinaries", gigantic lunches which filled many a Victorian stomach. In 1905 the building was renovated in the mock Tudor style that remains today.

The auditorium that now houses the theatre was opened in 1895 as "a place suitable for Balls, Cinderellas and Concerts" and its various

uses have included a Music Hall, a Cinema, Masonic Lodge and a venue for amateur dramatics. In the sixties a jazz and folk club featured, amongst others, the Crouch End All Stars and, on one famous occasion, Paul Simon (of Simon and Garfunkel fame).

Ovation acquired the lease on the first floor in 1997 and set about establishing 'Upstairs' as one of the leading fringe theatres in London.

The Gatehouse is now a pub in the JD Wetherspoon chain and has established a reputation for good value, service and an extensive menu. They also provide an excellent range of real ales and feature in the *CAMRA Good Pub Guide*.

It took over a hundred years to turn the Highgate Hall (as it was called in 1895) into the Village's first theatrical auditorium. We hope the Victorian residents would have approved.



1885



2013







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Since adopting ‘Upstairs at the Gatehouse’ as its home in March 2001, HGO has produced operas by Bizet, Blow, Donizetti, Dove, Floyd, Handel, Monteverdi, Mozart, Offenbach, Puccini, Purcell, Tchaikovsky, Verdi and Vaughan Williams.

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If you would be interested in singing with the company, either as a Principal or as a member of the Chorus, please get in touch with Martin Musgrave  
e-mail: [martin.musgrave@hgo.org.uk](mailto:martin.musgrave@hgo.org.uk)

If you would like to find out more about HGO, visit our website [www.hgo.org.uk](http://www.hgo.org.uk)

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Full details from: Roger Sainsbury, Secretary to the Friends of HGO, 88 Dukes Avenue, Muswell Hill, London N10 2QA – e-mail: [rnsainsbury88@gmail.com](mailto:rnsainsbury88@gmail.com)

## A VERY BIG THANK-YOU FROM HGO

to the Friends of HGO, and to a number of key donors, who prefer to remain anonymous. It is thanks to their loyal and generous support that we are encouraged and enabled to develop the scope of our work, and to continue in our pursuit of excellence

- Alastair Macgeorge, HGO Chairman -

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\* the citation of a HUGO award from Upstairs at the Gatehouse in 2010 to Alastair and Anne Macgeorge, who accepted it on behalf of HGO

\*\* Off West End Theatre Awards 2013 ([www.offwestend.com](http://www.offwestend.com))





## A THREE-MINUTE ACCOUNT OF 24 CRAZY HOURS IN THE HOUSEHOLD OF COUNT ALMAVIVA AT AGUAS FRESCAS, OUTSIDE SEVILLE

A full synopsis for later reading follows: in the meantime, here are the things you really need to know about the story of *The Marriage of Figaro* and the main characters who inhabit it.

The opera is based on the central play of a trilogy by the French playwright Beaumarchais. In the first of these three plays (operas by Rossini and Paisiello) Figaro is *The Barber of Seville*. Figaro fancies himself as a social fixer, though he is not as clever as he thinks he is, as becomes clear in both operas: his ploys frequently go wrong. In *The Barber* he helps Count Almaviva to woo Rosina, the ward of elderly Dr Bartolo who watches her night and day and is determined to marry her himself. By the end of the opera Figaro has engineered victory for Almaviva. He squares the grumpy Bartolo with a handsome pay-off, and the young lovers marry.

Three years down the line, in *The Marriage of Figaro*, the marriage is in trouble due to the Count's constant philandering. The Countess longs for their romance to be rekindled, but the Count makes matters worse by his jealousy – if he is bed-hopping all over the place then surely she too has a lover. Throughout the opera she is under emotional strain – there seems to be no end to her husband's indiscretions, yet she is continually being accused of infidelity. She is prepared to forgive: he is not.

'Downstairs', Figaro, now the Count's valet, is getting ready to marry Susanna, the Countess' maid and niece of the estate gardener, Antonio. Underlying the twists and turns of the 'crazy day' is the Count's recent decision to abandon the long-established custom of 'Master's Rights' by which the landed gentry gave themselves permission to spend a newly-wed's bridal night in her bed. This 'self-denial' has gone down well with the estate workers, but Susanna (smarter by far than Figaro) has sussed out that it does not apply to her – the Count is prepared to go to enormous lengths to have his way with her, and she and Figaro set out to thwart him.





The situation is complicated by the arrival of four other characters. The first two are Dr Bartolo, familiar from *The Barber*, and Marcellina, his housekeeper. They have a last-minute plan to stop Figaro from marrying Susanna and to force him to marry her instead. Figaro has borrowed money from Marcellina, and she is legally entitled to marry him if he fails to discharge the substantial debt. Bartolo is a delighted supporter: it is his opportunity to get his own back on Figaro for taking 'his' Rosina away from him. The Count seizes on this as his chance of delaying Figaro's wedding and giving himself longer to work on Susanna. We also meet Basilio, the resident music-teacher (again familiar from *The Barber*) whose appetite for scandal, gossip and mischief-making is insatiable. He delights in stirring up trouble wherever he finds it.

Last, but far from least, we meet Cherubino the page, a testosterone-fuelled teenager with a non-stop hunger for the girls and a profound passion for his godmother the Countess. The Count finds Cherubino an insufferable nuisance: wherever his desires take him, he seems to find Cherubino in his way. Determined to get rid of him once and for all, he gives Cherubino a commission in the army. The page is devastated, but somehow manages to stay around for the rest of the day, continuing to be at the centre of trouble. Despite his devotion to the Countess, he is under pressure to marry one of the estate girls, the gardener Antonio's daughter Barbarina (also one of the Count's conquests).

At the half-way point of the story (the stupendous finale of Act II), the Count, Bartolo and Marcellina (plus Basilio, who has sided with them) are exhilarated, while Figaro, Susanna and the Countess are in despair. Figaro has no way of paying off his debt to Marcellina, and his marriage to Susanna is in danger. Yet an hour or two later all has changed. Marriages will take place, but not the ceremony envisaged by the Count, Marcellina and Bartolo. Forgiveness will be sought and granted, but perhaps more to the Count's advantage than to his wife's. And behind the general celebrations the scene is being set for the third story in the trilogy, *The Guilty Mother*. But thereby hangs a tale – a long one for another day.

Synopses and historical note by Alastair Macgeorge





## FIGARO - A REVOLUTIONARY OPERA FOR REVOLUTIONARY TIMES

After *Idomeneo* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* in 1781 and 1782 respectively, Mozart cast around for more than two years for a suitable librettist for his next opera, above all one who would help him to show what he could do in an Italian opera (letter to his father, 7 May 1783). In that same letter he writes from Vienna: "Our poet here is now a certain Abbate Da Ponte. He has an enormous amount to do in revising pieces for the theatre and he has to write 'per obbligo' an entirely new libretto for Salieri, which will take him two months. He has promised after that to write a new libretto for me. But who knows whether he will be able to keep his word – or will want to?" The 'Abbate Da Ponte' was indeed ordained, though he was born Emmanuele Conegliano to Jewish parents, only taking the name of the Bishop of Ceneda, Lorenzo Da Ponte, when his father converted to Christianity in 1763. His taste for liberal politics and married women cost him his teaching job and, in 1779, a 15-year exile from Venice. He arrived in Vienna, via Dresden, in late 1781, with a recommendation to Salieri. Once there he gained favour with Emperor Joseph II, and when in 1783 Joseph abandoned German opera and revived the Italian company, Da Ponte, backed by Salieri, was appointed poet to the court theatre.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance for the history of opera of that appointment, for, in the brief space of five years, it gave rise to the three great Mozart operas – *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni* and *Così fan Tutte*. By 1790 Da Ponte's patron was dead, and his successor dismissed him (Salieri was blamed – who else?). For his last two works, *die Zauberflöte* and *La Clemenza di Tito*, Mozart reverted first to German opera with Schikaneder and secondly to opera seria, with a libretto by Metastasio: a year later he too was dead. Da Ponte lived adventurously around Europe for the next 14 years, and then in 1805, pursued by creditors, decamped to New York to join his English wife. There he combined the improbable trade of grocer and general merchant with private teaching, dealing in Italian books, and writing a monumental and highly coloured autobiography.

For Mozart, *The Marriage of Figaro* must have represented a colossal risk. Little is known of its origins other than through Da Ponte's memoirs, which are not exactly reliable. What does seem certain, though, is that it was Mozart who suggested to Da Ponte the idea of adapting Beaumarchais' play: and that, alone of his 18 completed operas, it was written without a commission. It was an extraordinarily bold proposal. In the run-up to the French Revolution, *La Folle Journée* or *Le Mariage de Figaro* had hit the headlines from the moment of its completion in 1778. Louis XVI forbade any performances of the play for six years because of its attacks on the manners and morals of the aristocracy – but like most subversive literature, it became known through underground readings. Eventually Beaumarchais achieved legal permission for it to be performed, and it was premièred, with resounding success, at the *Comédie Française* in April 1784. Word soon spread to Austria, and Emanuel Schikaneder planned to stage the play in Vienna in a German translation – till Joseph II, in February 1785, imposed





an absolute ban on any performance “because this play contains much that is offensive”. The text was, however, available, and Mozart had a copy (it was listed in his effects after his death). But what a leap of faith to propose to the Court poet an opera on a highly contentious and subversive theme, based on a play that could not be performed because it offended the Emperor (and doubtless the more conservative members of the Court).

It may be that Da Ponte, who refers in his memoirs to Mozart’s “divine genius”, was excited by the artistic and commercial possibilities of a collaboration with Mozart. In responding positively to Mozart’s proposition, if his own account is to be believed, he seems to have taken on the role of negotiator to ensure that the opera was not suffocated by royal or theatrical obstacles – for it was not merely the Emperor who needed to be persuaded to accept it but also the management of the court theatre. He advised Mozart that they should prepare both text and music without announcement, and then wait for the right moment to present the work to the theatre and to the Emperor – again, a high-risk strategy, which depended on Da Ponte being able to take advantage of his credit with Joseph II. They set to, and within six momentous weeks – probably in October/November 1785 – had completed the opera. This is attested not merely by Da Ponte’s autobiography but also in letters of Leopold Mozart to his daughter Nannerl. It was a staggering achievement.

The opera was then put on hold until Da Ponte had the decisive audience with Joseph, in which (he claims) he succeeded in removing all the Emperor’s objections – not merely to the subject but also to Mozart himself, whom Joseph considered to be essentially a composer of instrumental music. The story goes that at the end of the interview, the Emperor agreed to authorise performance and to allow the score to be handed to the copyists for preparation of the orchestral parts. Mozart was summoned to the palace, and apparently delighted Joseph with some excerpts from the opera (whatever the truth of Da Ponte’s account, the Emperor must have given Figaro his support). This blessing at the highest level in the land would effectively have overridden all opposition from the court theatre, or from any of the other leading composers of the time such as Salieri and Soler, both of whom had written operas to Da Ponte librettos.

So how is it that Beaumarchais was totally unacceptable while Da Ponte and Mozart were accepted with apparent warmth? Da Ponte must have exercised all his diplomatic skills to persuade Joseph II that they had taken out or blurred the passages which had caused offence in court circles. One obvious example is Figaro’s attack on Almaviva and all he stood for in Act V of Beaumarchais’ play: “Because you are a great lord, you believe you’re a great genius! . . . Nobility, fortune, rank, honours; all that makes you so proud! What have you done to merit such possessions? You took the trouble to be born, that’s all. And what’s more, you are a fairly ordinary sort of man!” The political, moral, sexual and social edge of Beaumarchais’ comedy may have been softened to please the Viennese: but Da Ponte and Mozart succeeded in preserving one of the keystones of the structure of *Le Mariage*., namely the primacy of the women’s roles. Beaumarchais was a proto-feminist, a stance which would surely have appealed to Mozart’s own instincts. The play (and the opera) should really be called *Susanna’s Wedding*,







because it is she – and the Countess – who consistently seek, and for the most part obtain, the upper hand. The women, including Marcellina and Barbarina, are throughout quicker-witted, more resourceful and more practically inventive than the men. They live dangerously, because the Count is something of a bull in a china shop – he has position and money, there is menace both in his treatment of both Cherubino and his questioning of Figaro, he guards his wife with jealousy rather than affection, and he seeks his pleasures in the chase – for new women. Figaro is more cunning and inventive than the Count, but almost always one jump behind the women. He is also liable to fits of jealousy and although affectionate, no match for Susanna, who constantly shows him up as slow in the uptake. None of the characters is a caricature: all are a credible part of a typical nobleman's household of the period, an estate created for the pursuit of pleasure – a microcosm of society in the ancien régime in which obligation and dependence operated at every level of society from the King to the housemaid. In short, not a million miles from Downton Abbey.

The opera – as opposed to the play – is more concerned with love than with social satire (although that remains as a sub-text): its themes run the gamut from despair to ecstasy: each 'level' within the household has its own perspective on events and relationships – level 1, Count and Countess, level 2, Bartolo and arguably Cherubino, level 2.5 Don Basilio (a priest as well as music-master), Marcellina and Don Curzio, level 3, Figaro, Susanna and Barbarina (who seek to be upwardly mobile via marriage), level 4, Antonio and the rest of the estate workers. The air is heady with sex, though less overtly than in Beaumarchais (it is hard to imagine Mozart's Countess subsequently having a baby by Cherubino, as did Beaumarchais' in the third play of the trilogy). In the comic ensembles, Mozart's music consistently transcends, with the help of Da Ponte's libretto, all the conventions and clichés of buffo opera. Strategies of pleasure loom large, counterbalanced by the dynamics of the relationship between the Count and Countess. By delaying the Countess' entry until the beginning of Act II, Da Ponte and Mozart set her aside from and above the household bustle of the first Act, and present her as a woman tired of the machinations and intrigues of life in the Almoviva household. She wants a real marriage: but it takes her from that melancholic entrance till half-way through her great third Act aria to come to terms with the fact that if she is to have a chance of saving and revitalising it, she is going to have to employ stratagems at least as devious as those of her husband and her staff. Only then can she engineer the reconciliation that can lead to a new start.

Da Ponte, in compressing Beaumarchais' inordinately long play – he cut out an entire act in which Marcellina's legal case against Figaro is tried – set out to create a "virtually new kind of spectacle". He excised a number of peripheral characters and pruned the text heavily. In the preface to the libretto, he wrote that he was 'obliged to omit . . . many a very charming scene and a number of good jests and sallies', substituting in their place "canzonettas, arias, choruses, and other forms, and words susceptible to music, things which can be supplied only by verse, but never by prose". Beaumarchais, according to Da Ponte's own account, admired the libretto for "contracting so many colpi di scena in so short a time, without the one destroying the other" – which betrays Da Ponte's pride in his achievement, whatever Beaumarchais really thought. But whereas Da Ponte





created a marvellous theatrical confection on which a great composer could work his magic, it is Mozart's music, heart-warming, witty, moving and sublime by turns, that lifts *The Marriage of Figaro* to the pinnacle it rightly occupies. We can admire Da Ponte, but it is Mozart we love and to whom we return time after time – as audiences throughout the world have done over the last 227 years.

It is difficult for the current generation of opera-goers to appreciate what a shock *Figaro* must have been for its first audiences. It was utterly new, a watershed in operatic history. With endless ingenuity it used ensembles (duets, trios, sextets and hugely complex finales) in ways never explored by earlier composers, even Mozart himself – to develop the plot, to accelerate the action (rather than slow it down) and to reveal the feelings and moods of the characters and explore their emotions. Indeed, as the opera director and founder of Opera Factory, David Freeman, has written, "often the most sublime music in the ensembles is reserved for moments of extreme moral doubt, irony and intrigue".

On April 25, 1786, Leopold Mozart wrote to his daughter: "le Nozze di Figaro is being performed on the 28th for the first time. It will be surprising if it is a success, for I know that very powerful cabals have ranged themselves against your brother. Salieri and all his supporters will again try to move heaven and earth to down his opera. Duschek told me recently that it is on account of the very great reputation which your brother's exceptional talent and ability have won for him that so many people are plotting against him". Leopold need not have been so pessimistic: *Figaro* was in fact first performed on May 1 under Mozart's direction (from the keyboard!), and was well received, though only eight further performances were given that year. It seems that its reputation grew with each successive performance, although some 'connoisseurs' – probably among the aristocracy – were reportedly less than enthusiastic. At the second performance (the source is again Leopold Mozart) 'five pieces were encored; at the third, seven were repeated, among them a short duetto that had to be sung three times.' On May 9, the Emperor proclaimed that "no piece for more than a single voice shall be repeated" in order "not to overextend the duration of the performances". Since, uncut, the opera lasts for more about three-and-a-quarter hours with one short interval, we can sympathise. Later that year, the popularity of *Figaro* was eclipsed by Martin y Soler's *Una Cosa Rara* – also based on a libretto by Da Ponte and mockingly quoted in the penultimate scene of *Don Giovanni*). It was not until the following year, when *Figaro* arrived in Prague that it became a runaway success, leading to the commission for *Don Giovanni*: and the Vienna revival in 1789 in turn led to the commission for *Così fan Tutte*. It was some time, though, before the opera was performed on the world stage in the form that we now know it. Early performances in Germany and Austria used spoken dialogue in German. The first performance at the Paris Opéra in 1793 used Beaumarchais' spoken text for the recitatives. In London, audiences first heard numbers from *Figaro* interpolated into works by Storace and Benucci before seeing the opera staged, in Italian, in 1812 – followed, in 1819 by a version in English reduced to three acts!





# THE STORY

## ACT I

The Marriage of Figaro takes place in a single day at the country estate of Count Almaviva outside Seville. All the characters are either part of his staff or associated with him. The occasion is the wedding-day of his valet, Figaro and the Countess' maid, Susanna. Figaro is checking whether there's enough room for the bed in the room that the Count has allocated to them. He takes no notice of Susanna, who is trying to get him to admire the veil she has chosen. Innocent that he is, he believes the room is just where it needs to be for their work: Susanna tells him that if that's what he thinks, he can sleep alone. He's dumbstruck, so she enlightens him. The Count, satisfied neither by playing at home or away, now has his eye on Susanna. Although 'Master's Rights' over his staff are supposedly a thing of the past, he would like to revive them. His ally is Don Basilio, the resident music-teacher. Figaro is understandably jealous and furious – so that's why the Count wants Susanna as his 'personal assistant' when he takes up his London appointment? He decides to make the Count dance to his tune.

Dr Bartolo arrives with Marcellina, a duenna (governess/companion) past the first flush of youth. Figaro owes Marcellina money, and has signed a contract promising to marry her if he can't pay back the debt. Bartolo, a self-important lawyer, is no friend of Figaro, who (in *The Barber of Seville*) had foiled his plans to marry his ward, Rosina, and delivered her into the 'safer' hands of her lover, Count Almaviva. He'll back Marcellina and have his vengeance. Susanna returns as Marcellina is leaving, and trades insults with her. In comes the Countess' testosterone-fuelled teenage pageboy, Cherubino. He flirts first with Susanna, but soon reveals that his godmother the Countess is the real object of his adoration. He's in a state because the Count has given him notice, having caught him alone with the gardener's daughter, Barbarina. He pinches one of the Countess' ribbons as a keepsake and sings breathlessly of his passion. He has to hide as the Count then arrives in pursuit of Susanna: will she meet him in the garden that evening? It's then the Count's turn to hide when the unctuous Don Basilio interrupts this tête-à-tête to 'warn' Susanna of the Count's affections, taunt her with being attracted to Cherubino, and reveal Cherubino's obsession with the Countess. Basilio shivers with delight when the Count emerges from hiding to demand Cherubino's scalp. Susanna does a mock faint to play for time and sympathy: she and Basilio ask the Count to forgive Cherubino – in vain: he demonstrates how he caught him with Barbarina, and in so doing, reveals Cherubino once more. Mayhem ensues; the Count summons Figaro, but loses his mastery of the situation when Cherubino discloses that he heard every word the Count said to Susanna. Figaro arrives with a bevy of estate-workers who present flowers to the Count. 'What's all this about?' he demands. Figaro says how pleased they all are that he's abolished 'Master's Rights', and asks him to perform the wedding ceremony. He'll do it, he says, and will give them all a party – but later (when he's found Marcellina). The staff reprise their chorus – with less enthusiasm. The Count is shamed into pardoning Cherubino, but sees a way of getting rid of him by giving him an immediate commission in his regiment. Figaro teases the boy about what to expect in the army.





## ACT II

Rosina, Countess Almaviva, bemoans the loss of her husband's love. Susanna is little comfort when she tells her that his pursuit of her is simply a business transaction. Figaro unsuccessfully tries to cheer them up: he has a plan. He's sent an anonymous letter via Basilio to tell the Count that his wife is meeting a lover that night. She's appalled, but Figaro is unmoved – the game that the Count is playing can rebound on him. Susanna, ever the smart one in the partnership, points out that Marcellina can't be discounted. 'Then we'll dress up Cherubino as a girl', says Figaro, 'send him to meet the Count and you can catch them red-handed – and then he'll have to give in to what we want'. They go along with this, for want of a better idea. Figaro departs, Cherubino arrives – with a song which he's persuaded to sing to the Countess. He's ready to be dressed up: Susanna locks the door and embarks on the task, but the Countess is nervous. She spots his commission – 'so soon!' – and notices that, crucially, it was not sealed. Susanna concentrates on making Cherubino look and walk like a girl. In the midst of this, the Countess catches Cherubino wearing the stolen ribbon. A moment of tenderness passes between them before she comes back to earth with a bump as the Count knocks and demands to know why her door is locked. Susanna is out of the room, the Countess panics and Cherubino frantically hides. She lets the Count in: he is deeply suspicious as she tells him she was just trying a new dress on. To her dismay, he then presents her with Figaro's anonymous letter. There's a crash in her wardrobe. 'What's that noise?' 'I didn't hear a thing.' 'Someone's in there', says the Count. 'Oh, it must be Susanna', she replies. The Count will have none of it, and demands Susanna to come out of the wardrobe. In the ensuing trio, Susanna creeps back in to the room, wondering how Cherubino has got away: the Countess tries to explain that Susanna has been trying on her wedding dress: and the Count insists that there's a man in the wardrobe. The Countess refuses to unlock the door, so the Count takes her with him to fetch tools to break it down – whoever is inside will have to wait till they get back. Cherubino emerges, and looks round frantically for a way of escape. Susanna tells him he'll break his neck if he jumps out of the window, but he does just that, landing with a crash in the flower-bed, and running off. Susanna has just time to hide in the wardrobe before the Count returns. The Countess finally confesses that it's Cherubino who has been hiding, which confirms all the Count's suspicions. 'Out you come' he shouts, as the finale begins.

The twists and turns of the next 20 minutes, one of the finest scenes in all opera, almost defy belief. The Countess pleads that they've been having harmless fun dressing up Cherubino, while the Count threatens to disown her. He is furiously jealous: she proclaims her innocence. At the height of his anger, Susanna suddenly comes out of the wardrobe – to the astonishment of both Count and Countess. 'What's the fuss about?' she says: 'if you want to kill anyone, it will have to be me.' The Count is baffled, and Susanna whispers to the Countess that Cherubino is safely out of the way. The Count fails to find a male miscreant and is forced to apologise. Susanna and the Countess use his discomfiture to round on him. For the moment they have the upper hand. 'So what was that anonymous letter?' asks the Count. 'Figaro wrote it, Basilio conveyed it', they tell him. 'Forgive and





forget' are the watchwords – till Figaro arrives to tell the Count and Countess that everything is ready for the wedding. 'Not so fast', says the Count, and produces Figaro's letter. 'Seen it before?' 'No' says Figaro, not realising that the game has been given away already. The Countess and Susanna prompt him, but he misses the cue and continues to deny the undeniable. The Countess begs the Count not to spoil the wedding day – at which point Antonio the gardener, Susanna's uncle and Barbarina's father, bursts in half drunk. A man has fallen out of the window and smashed his flowers. 'Where is he?' says the Count, as everyone else tries to shut him up. 'He just ran away' says Antonio. Figaro brings the backchat to an end by claiming it was he who jumped down – and twisted his knee in the fall. Antonio drops a bombshell – 'these are your papers I picked up, then?' The Count grabs them: 'what are they?' he demands of Figaro, who has to think fast. With Susanna's and the Countess' help, he 'remembers' that it is Cherubino's commission – which he had left behind because it needed sealing. The Count fumes, Figaro and his allies breathe again. Then in come Marcellina, Bartolo and Basilio, primed by the Count, to demand that Figaro must honour the terms of his contract with Marcellina – pay up or marry her. For them, everything is going to plan: for Figaro, Susanna and the Countess, everything has suddenly spun out of control as the music whirls, faster and faster, to its close.

## INTERVAL

### ACT III

The Count is bemused: he can't make out what on earth is going on. The Countess, meanwhile, is hatching a new plot, setting up Susanna to meet the Count that evening in the garden – an assignation she will keep herself. Susanna goes to borrow the Count's smelling salts for her mistress, and leads him to think that she'll let him have his way with her if he gives her the dowry he's 'promised' – then she can pay off Marcellina. 'You won't fail me?' he asks. 'No', 'Yes', 'No', she replies, clinching the deal in a seductive duet. Susanna admits that the smelling salts were a ruse to speak to him. The Count is hooked – until he hears Susanna whispering to Figaro 'no need for a lawyer now – we've won our case'. This immediately fuels all his old suspicions and he embarks on an outburst of vengeance, triumph and passion.

Enter Cherubino talking to Barbarina; she persuades him to come to her house so they can dress him up as one of the village girls – the prettiest – who plan to present flowers to the Countess. The Countess, alone, is fretting: she needs to know how the Count has taken Susanna's proposal – was it too rash? She rages at the depths she is forced to sink to curb his infidelity, and then, in her most famous aria, the emotional pivot of the whole opera, recalls the long-gone days of true love, and dares to hope that her devotion might win him back. Now she's determined to save her marriage, come what may. At this point Marcellina returns with Bartolo, the Count, Figaro and the Count's tame lawyer, Don Curzio, who decrees that Figaro must pay up or marry Marcellina. Figaro appeals to the







Count, who supports Curzio's ruling. Figaro argues that 'being a gentleman' of noble origin, he can't marry without the consent of his parents – and since he was a foundling, has no idea who they are. Marcellina is stunned when he reveals a birthmark on his arm: Figaro is her long-lost son, Rafaello – and Bartolo is his father! Susanna arrives with the money to pay the debt (the dowry promised by the Count – or perhaps a present from the Countess: it's unclear where she gets the money from) only to see Marcellina embracing Figaro. She is scandalised, and refusing to believe what she hears, gives Figaro a wallop. Eventually she has to accept that she's talking to her future in-laws, and her fury subsides. The Count and Curzio aren't giving up so easily – there's a penalty to pay for opposing them: but all is rejoicing in the other camp. Now there'll be a double wedding, with Bartolo and Marcellina tying the long-postponed knot alongside Figaro and Susanna – and 'the Count can choke with fury' for all they care.

Now Antonio is stirring up trouble again: he tells the Count that Cherubino is still around, dressed up as a girl in his house. He takes the Count off to see for himself. The Countess checks the details of her plot with Susanna – where did she invite him to meet her? She decides that 'in the garden' is too vague, and makes Susanna write a letter pinpointing the spot. They seal the letter with a pin, the return of which is to be the sign of acceptance. Barbarina leads in the troupe of village girls with Cherubino in their midst. The Countess picks him out, and Barbarina tells her that Cherubino is her cousin who came to stay for the wedding. Antonio and the Count burst into this pastoral scene, and Antonio pulls off Cherubino's disguise. The Count is all ready to punish Cherubino for his disobedience, till Barbarina, who is no innocent, reminds him that, when he was kissing and hugging her, he would say 'if you'll love me, I'll give you anything you want' – so can she please have Cherubino for her husband. Everyone from the Countess to Antonio enjoys the Count's discomfiture. Figaro takes his chance and sets the wedding going. The Count and Countess formally marry and bless both couples. Susanna slips her letter to the Count. In the course of the dance that follows Figaro spots the letter (but doesn't know the source) and watches the Count prick his finger on the pin. Everybody cheers the Count's announcement that the evening will be spent in revelry with feasting and singing and fireworks: and the Act ends with a chorus of praise to the Count for renouncing 'Master's Right' and restoring their honour.

## ACT IV

In the evening gloom Barbarina is groping about looking for the pin which the Count has given her to take back to Susanna. Figaro's jealousies are aroused – what is this errand she has been sent on? Barbarina tells him that she is to say to Susanna 'This is the seal of the pine trees', and not to let anyone see her. Figaro reassures her that there's no harm done, and then explodes in anger to Marcellina, who is with him. He'll keep watch, and if he catches them, they'd better look out. Marcellina hastens to warn Susanna in a gesture of feminine solidarity. Barbarina is still wandering about looking for the hiding place where she





hopes to find Cherubino. Figaro comes in with Basilio and Bartolo: he tells them through clenched teeth that they're to witness 'Master's Rights' being granted by his virtuous wife. At his signal they're to rush out and catch them in the act. Basilio reflects that crossing swords with the nobility is a dangerous game – they'll always come out on top. Figaro is ready, barely containing his fury at Susanna's apparent faithlessness. In despair he acts the tormented male, and in a ferocious misogynistic tirade snarls that 'it's only a fool who trusts a woman'. Enter Susanna, the Countess and Marcellina. Marcellina joins Barbarina in hiding while Figaro is watching and listening separately. Susanna and the Countess have exchanged cloaks. The Countess pretends to be cold and goes in, Susanna saying – loud enough for Figaro to hear – that she will stay and enjoy the fresh air 'under the pine trees'. She then teases him with a rapturous hymn to love – 'Come quickly, don't delay as night is falling' – meant of course for him: but, consumed with jealousy, he's convinced that it's aimed at the Count. By now the stage is full of people hiding in the shadows. Cherubino enters in search of Barbarina, and thinks he sees Susanna – but of course it's the Countess in Susanna's cloak.

Cherubino tries to flirt with her, but she rejects him firmly. In comes the Count, who thinks he sees Susanna: but now there are two men in pursuit. Cherubino tries to kiss the Countess, but gets the Count instead, who thumps him. Cherubino retreats into the gazebo on the left, Susanna and Figaro retire further into the shadows, and the coast is clear for the Count to woo his wife in the guise of Susanna. At this point the Count makes a big mistake – on top of the dowry he has already given Susanna, he gives his wife a diamond ring as token of his undying love. They too fade into the darkness, and all is calm for a moment as Figaro plans to catch them in his net. He sees Susanna, pretending to be the Countess, and tells her that she's just in time to see him spring his trap. Susanna, forgetting to change her voice, says that she'll have her vengeance too. The penny drops: and when Susanna decides to set her own trap by having a very public love-scene with Figaro, he plays along. She doesn't realise that he's teasing her, and boxes his ears ferociously, till he tells her he knew who she was all along. As they kiss and make up, the Count overhears them, and they continue their playlet for his 'benefit'. Back in full jealousy mode, he calls everyone together to witness his betrayal. Despite the pleas of everyone to forgive his wife, he is adamant and renounces her – there's one rule for the men, another for the women. But, like a *dea ex machina*, the Countess emerges from the shadows to bring light into the darkness. It is the Count's turn to go down on bended knee: and her turn to forgive. 'So love and compassion shall end our distress', sings the assembled company. And at the close of what Beaumarchais called *la Folle Journée* – the Crazy Day – the night's revelry at last begins.





## A FRESH LOOK AT AN OLD FAVOURITE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When beginning work on Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park* for HGO, I started with a blank slate. A libretto, a score, a novel, and no preconceptions. With *Figaro* it couldn't have been more different - it is after all one of the best-known operas. Whether we like it or not, we are all influenced by previous readings and productions of the piece. Should I go 'modern' or 'period'? Or more importantly, what was the opera saying to me?

In the first instance, I went back to the plays, looking for clues. Da Ponte's libretto is in many ways very faithful to Beaumarchais. Yet there are big differences - whilst the action remains the same, the characters differ, and none more so than the Countess.

In the play, it is evident that the young page troubles the Countess and shakes her to her very core. The famous 'ribbon' that appears in act I and II of the opera is like a leitmotiv in the play - she keeps it close to her heart and has it in act V (the equivalent act IV in the opera). In the opera, this 'infidelity' has gone - Mozart wanted a woman deeply in love, exclusively with her husband, and animated by the hope and will to reconquer him. Her aria in act III confirms this, especially the second half.

In the final act then, the two Countesses couldn't be further apart. Whilst Beaumarchais' Rosina forgives with a wink, knowing she's equally guilty, at least in thought for now, Mozart's Countess forgives in a much deeper manner, in a wonderful phrase of meditative tenderness and thoughtfulness. This soon became the most important moment for me in the opera, and the one that the whole piece leads to. But more of this in a moment.



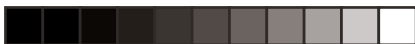


Yes, the piece is called *The Marriage of Figaro*, but the wedding actually takes place at the end of act III. That marriage is more a trigger – it gives momentum to the Count's chase for Susanna, and enables all events to take place in a day. Love in all its forms has an essential role in the action – erotic urges (established for the Count or budding for Cherubino), desire, philandering, attraction, nostalgia and the yearning to reconquer... and I was keen to have some physical representation of this. Young Cherubino is clearly a little Cupid. He and the Count have much in common – the same sexual energy and drive. They often go after the same women, which means they can end up in the same place at the same time. But they vary essentially in their roles and responsibilities. Whilst Cherubino is a young page, the Count has responsibilities to the household. The Almoviva household is a microcosm of society, with all its individuals. The Count is the head of the household, the top of the tree, the political – and military – authority, and everyone depends on him for social order, justice, and bread. He is the latest in the line of Almoviva men who have inherited more than a name and a status - he has duties too and ignoring them because he is driven by his natural urges must lead to a collapse of the house and the social order, the consequences of which are illustrated vividly in Holly Seager's design.

Whilst the Count is driven by his erotic urges, the Countess is guided by a very different Cupid – throughout she's chasing Love, hoping to rekindle the flame that led the Count to save her from Bartolo. This leads us finally back to that most important moment in the opera - the act IV forgiveness of the Count by the Countess. I believe that by that point the Count has lost all authority over the household. And the Countess has lost all hope of reconquering the Count. I believe her forgiveness is a mature and responsible decision designed to restore the social order and save the Household from destruction. Until Love knocks on her door once more.

Bruno Ravella – October 2013





# CAST

(in approximate order of appearance: \* début with HGO)

## FIGARO

Count Almaviva's valet

Tristan Hambleton \* (Nov 8, 13, 15, 16 eve, 10 mat)

Milo Harries (Nov 9, 12, 14 eve, 16 mat, 17 mat)

## SUSANNA

Countess Almaviva's maid

Elinor Rolfe Johnson\* (Nov 8, 13, 15, 16 eve, 10 mat)

Julie Moote \* (Nov 9, 12, 14 eve, 16 mat, 17 mat)

## DR BARTOLO

The Countess' former guardian

Tobias Odenwald \* (Nov 8, 13, 15, 16 eve, 10 mat)

Andrew Sparling (Nov 9, 12, 14 eve, 16 mat, 17 mat)

## MARCELLINA

His housekeeper

Michelle Bueno (Nov 8, 13, 15, 16 eve, 10 mat)

Alison Thorman (Nov 9, 12, 14 eve, 16 mat, 17 mat)

## CHERUBINO

The Countess' page

Eleanor Minney (Nov 8, 14, 15 eve, 10 mat, 17 mat)

Felicity Turner \* (Nov 9, 12, 13 eve, 16 mat, 16 eve)

## COUNT ALMAVIVA

A young Spanish nobleman

Nicholas Mogg \* (Nov 8, 15, 16 eve, 10 mat, 17 mat)

Jon Stainsby \* (Nov 9, 12, 13, 14 eve, 16 mat)

## DON BASILIO

The Count's music master

Ed Bonner (Nov 8, 13, 15, 16 eve, 10 mat)

William Davies (Nov 9, 12, 14 eve, 16 mat, 17 mat)

## COUNTESS ALMAVIVA

Elisabeth Poirel (Nov 8, 13, 15, 16 eve, 10 mat)

Jessica Gillingwater\* (Nov 9, 12, 14 eve, 16 mat, 17 mat)

## ANTONIO

The estate gardener

David Danson (Nov 8, 15, 16 eve, 10 mat, 17 mat)

Nicholas George (Nov 9, 12, 13, 14 eve, 16 mat)

## DON CURZIO

The Count's lawyer

Hugh Benson (all performances)

## BARBARINA

Antonio's daughter

Emily Phillips (Nov 8, 13, 15, 16 eve, 10 mat)

Harriet Burns (Nov 9, 12, 14 eve, 16 mat, 17 mat)

## BRIDESMAIDS

Morgane Kypriotti \*, Emma Lewis \* (all performances)

## MEMBERS OF THE COUNT'S ESTATE STAFF

Jennifer Begley \*, Hugh Benson \*, Harriet Burns \*, David Danson, Mimi Doulton \*,  
Nicholas George, Paul Ives, Morgane Kypriotti \*, Emma Lewis \* & Emily Phillips







## PRODUCTION TEAM

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR Bruno Ravella  
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER Holly Seager  
LIGHTING DIRECTOR Ben Donoghue  
STAGE MANAGER Rosie Cassell

## MUSIC TEAM

MUSIC DIRECTOR Oliver-John Ruthven  
CONSULTANT COACH Richard Hetherington  
RÉPÉTITEUR Yau Cheng

## MUSICA POETICA LONDON

VIOLIN I Davina Clarke	CLARINET II Helen Bennett
VIOLIN II Beatrice Scaldini	BASSOON I Sinead Frost
VIOLA Claudia Norz	BASSOON II Freddie Scadding Nov 10 mat, 16 mat, 16 eve, 17 mat
CELLO Kate Conway	Sue Eversden Nov 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15
BASS Geraldine Warner	HORN I Meredith Moore
FLUTE Ian Judson	HORN II Rebecca Alexander
OBOE Jemma Bausor	HARPSICHORD / Oliver-John Ruthven
CLARINET I Chris Goodman	DIRECTOR



## ARTISTS

**Jennifer Begley – Chorus** Jennifer studied Drama and Theatre Arts at Goldsmith's College, University of London. While at Goldsmith's she performed in a wide range of theatrical and musical productions including performances at the Edinburgh fringe festival. Alongside her studies she was also President and Vocal Coach for Goldsmith's Musical Theatre Society. As President she directed a variety of cabaret shows and musicals including a sell-out performance of *The Little Shop of Horrors*. Since graduating Jennifer has been concentrating primarily on her singing and is currently studying with Janice Chapman. Her recent stage highlights include the role of Romeo from Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and Mercedes from Bizet's *Carmen* for City Opera's opera scenes at the City Lit.

**Hugh Benson – Don Curzio & Chorus** Hugh is a Choral Scholar of Southwark Cathedral and King's College London, the latter being his current university, where he studies Music. He has played *The Magic Flute's* Tamino in a Southgate Youth Opera production and *Frederic* in *Pirates of Penzance* with King's College London Gilbert & Sullivan Society, as well as having sung chorus and solo parts in the *Fairy Queen* by Henry Purcell; later this year he will appear in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the King's Opera Society and as Leonard Meryll in Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Yeoman of the Guard* with Southgate Opera Company.

**Ed Bonner – Basilio** Ed read music at Cambridge and studied singing at Trinity Laban with Lynton Atkinson. Recent solo appearances have included Mozart's *Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah* with the Burgate Singers, and chorus *Macbeth* for the English National Opera. Ed has spend the past year studying to be a teacher of the Alexander Technique. He enjoys playing football and cricket, and has captained a victorious team in an ice cricket tournament in Estonia.

**Harriet Burns – Barbarina & Chorus** Harriet has just completed her final year at the Royal Academy of Music, where she studied with Jennifer Dakin and Audrey Hyland. She now studies with Sue McCulloch. Recent highlights include a concert performance of Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* with the Academy Manson ensemble, Mozart's *Requiem* at St Martin in the Fields and Alex Paxton's *The Elephant's Lament* at the Forge, Camden. Harriet has recently sung principal roles with the Grim's Dyke Opera Company in Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Iolanthe* and *Yeomen of the Guard*, *Gretel* (*Hansel und Gretel* - Humperdinck) and *Tina* (*Flight - Dove*) for the Royal Academy of Music opera scenes. Harriet is grateful for the support of the Sir James Caird trust and the Bennett of Lincoln Scholarship. When not singing Harriet spends much of her spare time either cooking or watching TV, *New Girl* being her programme of choice at present!

**Rosie Cassell – Stage Manager** Rosie started at Hampstead Garden Opera in 2009 as an Assistant Stage Manager. She spent two years at HGO, stage managing Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Handel's *Semele*. Rosie then attended Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts for a Production Arts degree specializing in Set Design. After graduating this summer she is delighted to be back at HGO for *The Marriage of Figaro*.

**Yau Cheng – Répétiteur** Hong Kong-born pianist Yau is an active piano-duo sight- reader, page-turner and orchestral-reduction player. Yau is currently a Leverhulme Artist and Junior Fellow in Piano Accompaniment at Trinity Laban. She earned her MMus and BMus in Piano from Indiana University Bloomington (USA) under the tutelage of Emile Naoumoff, and another MMus in Chamber Partner Recruitment with Caroline Palmer at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Her favourite place has been the Académie Internationale de Musique at Château de Rangipport (France) where she could watch swans cross the Seine River while practising. Away from the piano, Yau makes pretty wavy slurs on music notation software Finale and says 'hi' to every animal that walks past her.





**David Danson – Antonio & Chorus** David is a vet who has spent most of his career in the pharmaceutical industry. He is currently a director of several companies in the pharmaceutical sector, is a member of the Council of the Royal Veterinary College and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Medicine. David studied singing privately with Ryland Davies. Roles include Don Giovanni, Count (Figaro), Escamillo, Dulcamara, Belcore, Kecai, Aeneas, Kaspar, Dr Coppelius, Capulet and Rochefort. He has taken part in Masterclasses at Glyndebourne under the direction of Jonathan Hinden. He was Second Priest in HGO's Magic Flute in 2010 and Sir Thomas Bertram in Mansfield Park last April. He is now enjoying his new status as a humble gardener.

**William Davies – Basilio** William is entering his second year of postgraduate vocal studies at Trinity Laban under the tuition of Neil Baker, Tim Travers-Brown and Helen Yorke. He is generously supported by the first Savile Club Scholarship (2012/13) and the Kathleen Creed Scholarship (2012/13 and 2013/14). Recent stage highlights include Orpheus (Orphée aux enfers) for Trinity Laban Opera and Monsieur (The Dancing Master world première) for the Malcolm Arnold Festival. Upcoming engagements include Don Ottavio (Don Giovanni) in concert and Tito (La Clemenza di Tito) for Trinity Laban postgraduate opera scenes. William is delighted to be returning to HGO after his debut as Mr Rushworth in Mansfield Park; this time around you might describe his preparation as 'Snape-heavy'.

**Ben Donoghue – Lighting Designer** Ben is a lighting designer for theatre, opera, dance and contemporary art. He studied at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, gaining distinction on the Stage Electrics & Lighting Design postgraduate course. Recent credits include St. John's Session - Eddie Peake & Actress, St. John At Hackney Church; Glory Dazed by Cat Jones - Soho Theatre; Donald Judd Window - The Conran Shop, South Kensington; Pentecost - St. Leonard's Church, Shoreditch; King's Week - The King's School, Canterbury; Ashes & Sand, The House Of Special Purpose, Reigen, Get To Know The World and Ladybird - RADA; Associate Lighting Designer: Privates On Parade, Michael Grandage Company. Ben is currently Deputy Head of Lighting at Punchdrunk's The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable.

**Mimi Doulton – Chorus** Mimi is a second year choral scholar at King's College London, where she is studying Music with French and Russian. Recent performances include Marzelline and Hanna Glawari for opera scenes with Helios Chamber Opera, Betty Doxy in Britten's 'The Beggar's Opera' and Jenny in Weill's 'Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny'. She is also a research intern in digital development and technology at the Royal Opera House, although were people to ask her about her job they would be forgiven for thinking she is paid to spend the day googling Jonas Kaufmann...

**Nicholas George – Antonio & Chorus** Nicholas studied at Birkbeck University, City Lit, The Complete Singer, Morley College and Cratoule Singing School, France. Companies sung with include Grimeborn Festival 2012, Riverside Opera and Surrey Opera. Roles include; Gianni Schicchi (Il Trittico), Schaunard (La Bohème) for Opera South East, Figaro (The Marriage of Figaro) for Harrow Opera, Papageno, Frank and Strephon (Magic Flute, Die Fledermaus and Iolanthe) all at Brent Opera, Raoul de Gardefeu (La Vie Parisienne) for Southgate Opera, Masetto (Don Giovanni) for Tonic Opera and Sacristan (Tosca) for Philharmonia Britannica/ Midsummer Opera. Nicholas has been working on his gurning since his last HGO appearance as The Fool in Hugh the Drover. He hopes that the wind doesn't change though as, next week, he tackles the roles of Morales and Dancairo in Guildford Opera's Carmen!





**Jessica Gillingwater – Countess Almaviva** Jessica has just completed her MMus at the RNCM studying with Louise Winter where her studies were supported by the D'Oyly Carte Foundation. Her operatic roles have included First Lady, Die Zauberflöte (Mozart/Weimar Lyric Opera Studio); Giunone, Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria (Monteverdi/RNCM Opera); Miranda, The Dancing Master (Arnold/Malcolm Arnold Festival); Mother/Witch, Hansel & Gretel (Humperdinck/ Didsbury Festival Opera) and Helena, A Midsummer Night's Dream (Britten/Co-Opera). Jessica has a background in choral music and is an ad-hoc member of the BBC Singers. Jessica hopes that time spent re-enacting Pride and Prejudice (more specifically singing the BBC series theme tune) whilst walking in the Chatsworth estate can be considered methodical preparation for her current role.

**Tristan Hambleton – Figaro** Tristan studied History of Art at St John's College Cambridge and is currently a member of the Opera School at the RAM under Glenville Hargreaves and Audrey Hyland. In recent years Tristan has been establishing himself as a recitalist and concert singer at leading venues in the UK and Netherlands with orchestras such as The Hallé, Devon Baroque, Camerata Viva Tübingen and The London Mozart Players. His stage roles include Cadmus & Somnus in Semele, Hermann Ortel in Die Meistersinger, Elviro in Serse, Achilla in Giulio Cesare, Le Philosophe in Massenet's Chérubin, Superintendent Budd in Albert Herring, Lord Dunmow in Lennox Berkeley's A Dinner Engagement, Masetto in Don Giovanni, Nick Shadow in The Rake's Progress and Don Alfonso in Così fan tutte. Future engagements include more Handel: Re di Scozia (Ariodante – RAO) and Solomon (LMP). Tristan is generously supported by the ABRSM and the Josephine Baker Trust; he is also a Jackdaws Young Artist, a Samling Scholar and a member of the Royal Academy's Song Circle. Away from the stage Tristan tutors in Italy for Art History Abroad and enjoys long distance running.

**Milo Harries – Figaro** Milo is studying on the Postgraduate Diploma course at the RCM with Peter Savidge and Simon Lepper. Roles include Figaro (Le Nozze di Figaro, English Studio Opera), Nick Shadow (The Rake's Progress, OperaCoast), Aeneas (Dido and Aeneas, Black Robin Opera, English Studio Opera), Starveling (A Midsummer Night's Dream, Co-Opera Co.), Demetrius (A Midsummer Night's Dream, cover, Co-Opera Co.), Masetto (Don Giovanni, cover, Co-Opera Co.), and chorus for Opera Holland Park's Les Pêcheurs de Perles. Future plans include Vaughan Williams' Five Mystical Songs with the Hammersmith and Fulham Choral Society, the UK premiere of Philip Bračanin's song cycle Throw Me a Heaven Around a Child, and thwarting yet more costume designers with his inability to grow proper facial hair.

**Richard Hetherington – Consultant Coach** Richard Hetherington, conductor, répétiteur and pianist, is a member of the permanent music staff at The Royal Opera. He has conducted performances of La Sonnambula and Le Nozze di Figaro for The Royal Opera, Rachmaninov Vespers for Spoleto Festival, Le Nozze di Figaro for Aix-en-Provence, and the Britten Sinfonia with Alice Coote in an acclaimed performance of Britten's Phaedra at Wigmore Hall in 2012. He works closely with Sir Antonio Pappano at ROH and enjoyed a special association with the late Richard Hickox. He has worked with Netherlands Opera, Opera Australia, Aix-en-Provence Festival, the BBC Proms, Salzburg Festival, Wiener Festwochen and St Endellion Festival. He has assisted many leading conductors including Sir Andrew Davis, Sir Simon Rattle, Semyon Bychkov, Sir Mark Elder, Daniel Oren, Daniel Harding, Bertrand de Billy, Marc Albrecht, Sir Charles Mackerras and the late Sir Colin Davis. He has played continuo with the Royal Opera orchestra, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic. An accomplished and regular recitalist, Richard has performed with Renée Fleming, Sir John Tomlinson, Eva-Maria Westbroek, Juan Diego Flórez, Marina Poplavskaya, Robert Tear, Peter Brondor, Roderick Williams, Mark Padmore and Stefan Vinke. This summer he assisted Antonio Pappano at the Salzburg Festival in an acclaimed new production of Verdi's Don Carlo. He is Music and Artistic Director of The Concert Opera Recital, a new UK-based non-profit performance company.





**Paul Ives – Chorus** Paul is delighted to be singing again with HGO in The Marriage of Figaro. He took part in HGO's very successful 2006 Figaro and last year's award-winning *Così fan tutte*, directed by Daisy Evans. He has sung with HGO since 2004, appearing in eleven operas, with composers from Blow to Vaughan Williams. This followed retirement from a busy career as a chartered engineer working on naval and airborne command systems, while enjoying choral work, concert performances of opera and oratorio and occasional staged opera appearances, including Antonio in his first Figaro. He also sings with Opera South, of which he is a trustee and director. Paul sang from his earliest years, only avoiding precocious fame in renditions of musical comedy at a very young age by the good sense of his parents. John Cameron and Pamela Bowden helped enormously with his vocal training and he has studied with Ryland Davies for many years.

**Michelle Jueno – Marcellina** Michelle trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama where she gained her Masters Degree in Vocal Performance. Opera roles include Charlotte Werther, Second Lady Magic Flute (GSMD), Bradamante (Alcina - for Hampstead Garden Opera) and Minerva (Orpheus in the Underworld) for BYO. She made her début last year with Dorset Opera as Lay Sister in Puccini's *Suor Angelica*. For Kentish Opera she has understudied the roles of Mercedes (Carmen), Olga and Madame Larina (Eugene Onegin) and has sung the role of the High Priestess (Aida). She also played the role of Lady Bertram in HGO's recent production of *Mansfield Park* by Jonathan Dove.

**Morgane Kypriotti – Bridesmaid & Chorus** Morgane was born in Paris where she studied at the Paris National Conservatoire while undertaking a musicology degree at La Sorbonne University. She joined the undergraduate programme at GSMD under Susan Waters in 2012, where her studies are supported by the Guildhall School Trust. As a chorister, she has participated in various productions with professional ensembles in Paris, such as *Orpheus* and *Eurydice* by Gluck with Paris Opera Atelier Lyrique and *Le Jeune Choeur de Paris*. She has also performed as a soloist for the French composer Isabelle Aboulker.

**Emma Lewis – Bridesmaid & Chorus** Emma is currently studying for an Mmus at Trinity Laban with Sophie Grimmer and Jean-Paul Pruna, supported by an academic scholarship. Recent performances include Opera Holland Park's 2013 production of *Madame Butterfly* (chorus) and singing the role of Sorceress in Eboracum Baroque's touring production of *Dido and Aeneas* at the Grimeborn Opera Festival and Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Outside the opera-sphere, Emma is a choral scholar at the Old Royal Naval College Chapel in Greenwich and St-Martin-in-the-Fields. The Marriage of Figaro is Emma's first show with HGO, and she has enjoyed meeting and singing with such a friendly and welcoming musical community.

**Eleanor Minney – Cherubino** Eleanor is delighted to be returning to the cast of HGO and looks forward to prancing about the stage wielding a sword as the naughty, flirtatious young stripling, Cherubino. Unsurprisingly, she has not attempted to draw any elements from her previous HGO role, Fanny Price in Dove's *Mansfield Park* (2013), to her current one. Recent performances include Mercedes (Carmen), Maddalena (Rigoletto), alto soloist in Bach's B Minor Mass with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the English Baroque Soloists and appearing on the BBC 2 documentary 'Bach: A Passionate Life' singing 'Erbarme Dich' from the St. Matthew Passion. Eleanor is also a busy consort singer and performs regularly with The Monteverdi Choir, Tenebrae and The Sixteen. Off the stage Eleanor enjoys cooking and climbing trees. [www.eleanorminney.com](http://www.eleanorminney.com)







**Nicholas Mogg – Count Almaviva** Nicholas was a choral scholar at Clare College, Cambridge where he read music. He has sung in the Monteverdi choir since June 2012 (for a year as an Apprentice), and continues to work closely with Sir John Eliot Gardiner. Previous operatic roles include: Lysander, The Fairy Queen (Benslow Music); Falke, Die Fledermaus (Cambridge University Opera Society); Bartley, Riders to the Sea (Clare College Music Society); Starveling/Moon, A Midsummer Night's Dream (Shadwell Opera). Nicholas spent the early part of the summer singing at Garsington Opera in their production of Rossini's Maometto II. He is delighted to be singing the Count for HGO and will always remember to look under the bed sheets for intruders.

**Julie Moote – Susanna** Winner of the Margaret Fletcher Lieder Prize 2009, Julie hails from Canada, and has just completed a PhD in Educational Psychology at the University of Edinburgh while also studying singing and sustaining a busy performance schedule. Studying regularly with Patricia MacMahon and Eric von Ibler, Julie has also received coaching from tutors including Sue McCulloch, Elaine Kidd, and Richard Jackson at the Abingdon Summer School. Julie's opera roles include Pamina (Magic Flute), Frasquita (Carmen), Semele, Anne Trulove (Rake's Progress), Gianetta (L'Elisir d'amore), Servilia (La clemenza di Tito) and Nella (Gianni Schicchi), and in musical theatre she has sung the roles of Babe (The Pajama Game), Jeanie (Hair) and Lady Psyche (Princess Ida). She was also a soloist for the Edinburgh University Chamber Choir under the direction of Eric von Ibler, held a choral scholarship at Marchmont St Giles, and was accepted onto the Postgraduate course at the Royal College of Music this fall. Julie is very grateful to all at HGO who have welcomed her, and her cakes, with open arms and empty stomachs!

**Tobias Odenwald – Bartolo** Originally from Wechterswinkel, Bavariashire, Tobias first found his musical self through the piano and the saxophone. Touring Germany and Austria with his blues/soul band as a teenager, he got soon used to (and loved) being in the spotlight. Unfortunately, a projected singing career as a heldentenor was harshly marred by profound mutation and therefore, from an early age on, he has mostly been cast as elderly and often grumpy men, including Montague in Romeo und Julia and the hermit in Der Freischütz at the conservatory in Würzburg. He subsequently undertook extensive training to impersonate a doctor, a skill that proved invaluable when playing Dulcamara earlier this year at the Morley Opera Course directed by Philip Headlam, where he also was Leporello and Filipo.

**Emily Phillips - Barbarina & Chorus** Born in North London, Emily trained at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff after completing a Music & Media degree at Sussex University. Operatic roles this year include 2nd Nenella in I Gioielli della Madonna (Wolf-Ferrari, Opera Holland Park), Belinda in Dido & Aeneas (Barefoot Opera), Julia Bertram in Mansfield Park (Hampstead Garden Opera) & Prima Cercatrice in Suor Angelica (Giornata Opera.) Emily has performed with British Youth Opera in Tuscany and Opéra de Baugé in France, where she was awarded the Gil-Rodriguez scholarship for excellence. Last summer she played the role of First Boy in the Longborough Opera Young Artist production of Die Zauberflöte and Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream (Co-Opera Co.) She was also accepted onto Scottish Opera's extra chorus list. Forthcoming engagements for 2014 include Bastienne in Bastien & Bastienne and The Dew Fairy in Hansel & Gretel for Pop Up Opera. [www.emilyphillips.weebly.com](http://www.emilyphillips.weebly.com)

**Elisabeth Poirel – Countess Almaviva** Elisabeth was born in France and came to London in her twenties to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She obtained her Masters there and then went on to complete the opera course. Since then she has been juggling singing, teaching, and having a family, and she sometimes wishes the days were 36 hours long. Nevertheless rejoining HGO for this production of Figaro has made the acrobatics well worthwhile!





**Bruno Ravella - Production Director** Bruno studied in France then moved to London. This is his fourth production with Hampstead Garden Opera, after *The Elixir of Love*, *The Clemency of Titus* and *Mansfield Park* (nominated for Best Production at the Offies 2013). He has also directed *Falstaff* and *La Traviata* (Iford Arts), *Giulio Cesare* (Stand'été Moutier, Switzerland), *Charpentier's La Descente d'Orphée aux enfers* and *Blow's Venus and Adonis* (Les Arts Florissants), *Carmen* (Riverside Opera), *La Descente d'Orphée aux enfers* (Glyndebourne Jerwood Project) and a community project *Hansel and Gretel*. In 2015 Bruno will direct *Strauss' Intermezzo* for Garsington Opera. He has revived *Rinaldo* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Glyndebourne on Tour), *Così fan tutte* and *Faust* (Valencia, Spain) and *La Traviata* (Grand Théâtre de Genève). He has worked as an assistant, revival and associate director for The Royal Opera, Glyndebourne Festival, Scottish Opera, Garsington Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Komische Oper Berlin, Angers-Nantes Opéra, and the opera houses of Los Angeles, Houston, Leipzig, Monte Carlo and Parma. [www.brunoravella.com](http://www.brunoravella.com).

**Elinor Rolfe Johnson – Susanna** Elinor graduated from Cambridge University with a Masters in Music. She has just completed her two years on the Opera school at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where she was a scholarship holder. She has performed at venues including Theatre Royal Glasgow, L'Archevêché Aix-en-Provence, Snape Maltings and St. George's Hanover Square. Operatic roles include *Pamina Die Zauberflöte*, *Sophie Der Rosenkavalier* and *Tytania A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Song and oratorio repertoire comprise works by Britten, Poulenc, Bach, Schubert, Mozart, Haydn and Strauss. A finalist at the 2010 London Handel Festival Competition, Elinor more recently performed the role of *Ismene* in *Telemann's Orpheus* for the Classical Opera Company. This summer she gave her début recital at the Wigmore Hall with William Vann. Forthcoming engagements include the title role in *Didone Abbandonata* by Handel for Ensemble Serse in the New Year. Elinor also holds a Masters degree from the Royal Academy in Violin and plays regularly for fun. She is a history buff, especially intrigued these days by the Plantagenets, and has recently taken up golf, at which she is adequate but undauntedly enthusiastic!

**Oliver-John Ruthven – Music Director** Oliver-John began his musical career as a chorister at Westminster Abbey. He has been Music Director of Hampstead Garden Opera since 2008. After completing a year as keyboards apprentice to the Monteverdi Choir under Sir John Eliot Gardiner, he has performed and recorded as harpsichordist of the English Baroque Soloists. He has previously held positions as cover conductor to the Royal Ballet and Acting Director of the Halle Youth Choir. Oliver-John is in demand as a continuo player, and is harpsichordist for *Musica Poetica London* and *Cantum Barbum*. He has worked with Sir Mark Elder, Christophe Rousset, and Jonathan Dove. He studies harpsichord with James Johnstone.

**Holly Seager - Set & Costume Designer** Holly has designed: *Harlesden Highstreet* (Tara Arts), *Mansfield Park* (Upstairs at the Gatehouse (nominated for Best Opera Production, Off West End Awards 2013) *Carmen* (Riverside Opera 2013), *The Upstairs Room* (The King's Head), *Hindle Wakes*, (Finborough Theatre - nominated for Best Designer, Off West End Awards 2012), *Chapel Street*, (Edinburgh Festival), *Into The Woods*, (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), *Sweeney Todd* 2011 (NYMT at The Rose, Kingston) and *The Goodnight Bird*, (Finborough). Holly has assisted: *Kerry Bradley on Tu i Teraz* (Here and Now) (Hampstead Theatre), *Mark Friend on Sweeney Todd* 2010 (NYMT, site-specific), *Jean-Marc Puissant on God's Garden*, (Royal Opera House, Linbury Studio) and *Jason Denvir on Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *New Boy and Life Coach* (Trafalgar Studios), *The Revenger's Tragedy* (The Rose, Kingston) and *All Bob's Women*, (The Arts Theatre). She was also part of *A Celebration of Young People* in the Performing Arts (NYMT at Buckingham Palace).





**Andrew Sparling – Bartolo** After one year of a Choral Exhibition at Clare College Cambridge Andrew took a 25-year break from singing to concentrate on other musical activities. A chance conversation with a mezzo over breakfast in Belfast encouraged him to try again; he has so far portrayed on stage a distraught would-be fiancé, an amorous bullfighter, three grumpy fathers and an undercover police-informant vicar.

**Jon Stainsby – Count Almaviva** Jon studied with Scott Johnson at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Opera School, performing roles including Junius (Britten, *The Rape of Lucretia*), Herr Fluth (Nicolai, *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*) and Demetrius (Britten, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, co-production with Scottish Opera). Prior to this he spent four years at the University of Oxford completing a doctorate in seventeenth-century English literature and political thought, which didn't make a particularly obvious contribution to his preparations for a singing career, but did at least give him something slightly unorthodox to include in his bio. He sings with EXAUDI, Dunedin Consort, the BBC Singers and Collegium Vocale Gent, and will soon perform the baritone role in Claude Vivier's *Kopernikus* with De Nederlandse Opera Talent Development Programme in Amsterdam.

**Alison Thorman – Marcellina** Alison made her operatic debut as Aunt Norris in HGO's production of *Mansfield Park* last April and is somewhat non-plussed to find herself cast - so obviously against type - as yet another 'old bat' in *Figaro*. Her main career has been in the law, both as a solicitor and university lecturer. Singing-wise, she has studied with Susan Waters and receives coaching from Jennifer Partridge.

**Felicity Turner – Cherubino** This is Felicity's first foray into the world of opera. She read Music and Drama at Royal Holloway, University of London where she was also a choral scholar. After taking part in the first Genesis Sixteen choral training scheme, Felicity became a member of the Choir of the Chapels Royal, HM Tower of London and enjoys a wide-ranging solo and choral singing career. A curiosity about opera led her to a brilliant year studying at the Morley Opera School and then to HGO. She cannot think of a more lovely and supportive company to begin this journey with! Felicity also looks forward to taking the role of Third Spirit in Opera Project's production of *The Magic Flute* this autumn.

## WE ARE ESPECIALLY GRATEFUL TO

to Set Assistants Freyja Costelloe and Cora Forsdick,  
to Costume Assistant Hilda Greenwood,  
to Garsington Opera for the loan of props and costumes,  
to Rob Mills for designing the posters and flyers, and for his help with the programme,  
and to all who have aided HGO in staging this production,  
not least those who came on board after the programme went to press.





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