



The Marriage of Figaro

by Beaumarchais

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Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais was born in Paris in 1732. The son of a clockmaker he was appointed at the age of twenty-two as watchmaker to Louis XV. He married his predecessor's widow, gained control of her fortune and adopted the name of Beaumarchais from one of her smaller properties. Undaunted by the break up of his marriage or the loss of his riches he embarked on an adventurous career as courtier, music teacher, financial speculator, litigant, confidential agent, gun-runner and, ultimately, man of letters.

His first two plays, *Eugénie* (written in 1764 after a visit to Madrid to extricate his sister from an unhappy love affair) and *The Two Friends* (1770) achieved only limited success but his numerous lawsuits soon provided him with ammunition for a series of 'Mémoires' which attacked his adversaries and established his literary reputation. In the midst of all his legal wrangling, Beaumarchais completed the first of his two great comedies, *The Barber of Seville*, in 1772. Originally written as a comic opera it was refused by the Comédie Italienne because they thought it caricatured one of their leading players, formerly a barber. Rewritten as a play it was accepted by the Comédie Française but did not reach the stage until 1775. Nine years later, after an even harder struggle with the censorship, its sequel, *The Marriage of Figaro*, had its first long-awaited performance. It was a huge success. Mozart's opera followed in 1786 and in 1787 Beaumarchais collaborated with Salieri in his own successful opera, *Tarare*.

The revolution of 1789 brought the end of Beaumarchais' material success. He suffered exploitation, confiscation of his possessions, exile and imprisonment but survived them all and returned in 1796 to rebuild his shattered fortunes once again. His last play, *The Guilty Mother*, (1797) was the third of the Figaro trilogy.

The *Marriage of Figaro* drew heavily on Beaumarchais' personal experiences and on his varied background. It was regarded by his contemporaries as a daring, even a political play, in that it commented on and ridiculed the mores of great noblemen, the ignorance of magistrates and the corruption of lawyers. Whilst there is something of Beaumarchais in many of the play's characters he is above all the ubiquitous and plausible Figaro and there can be no doubt that Figaro's thoughts and feelings are Beaumarchais' own.

Beaumarchais was a man of immense wit and feeling, of tremendous drive and imagination. He founded the Society of Authors and established the system of royalties as payment for playwrights. He brought fun back into the theatre much as Goldsmith did in England, breaking down the convention of formality which had grown up since Molière's time. His dialogue

Leeds Arts Centre at the Civic

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was colloquial and his people real in eighteenth century Paris. It is our loss that his two great plays are known to us mainly through Rossini and Mozart.

The plot of *The Marriage of Figaro* concerns the further adventures of the characters who first appeared in *The Barber of Seville*. The earlier play presented Figaro, barber and general factotum, helping Count Almaviva to rescue the young and beautiful Rosine from the guardianship of (and enforced marriage with) Doctor Bartholo.

Now, some three years later, it is Figaro's turn to be in love and on the point of marriage with Suzanne (the countess's maid) who has also taken the count's fancy. Figaro's plans are further complicated by Marceline, who wants to marry him herself, and Cherubin, the count's all-too-charming young page.

The text of *The Marriage of Figaro* used in this production is that translated by John Wood but since the play originally ran for four and a half hours, a number of cuts have had to be made, including those recommended by the translator.

The action of the play takes place during one day at the castle of Aguas Frescas, three leagues from Seville.

Act I A room in the castle
Act II The Countess's bedroom

INTERVAL

Act III The great hall
Act IV A gallery
Act V The gardens

There will be one interval of twenty minutes during which the theatre bar will be open. Ice cream will be on sale in the auditorium and coffee will be available in the bar.

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The public may leave the Civic Theatre at the end of the performance by all exit and entrance doors and such doors must at that time be open. All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept entirely free from chairs or any obstruction. The safety curtain must be lowered and raised once immediately before each performance to check that it is in proper working order.

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CAST

Count Almaviva, <i>Governor of Andalusia</i>	John Cohen
The Countess, <i>his wife</i>	Anne Robinson
Figaro, <i>his valet and major-domo</i>	Brian Jones
Suzanne, <i>maid to the Countess, betrothed to Figaro</i>	Pam Wilson
Marceline, <i>housekeeper</i>	Betty Triggs
Antonio, <i>gardener at the castle, uncle of Suzanne & father of Fanchette</i>	Don Wilson
Fanchette, <i>Antonio's daughter</i>	Vicky Atkinson
Cherubin, <i>the Count's page</i>	Margaret Artle
Bartholo, <i>a doctor from Seville</i>	Robin Clayton
Bazile, <i>music master to the Countess</i>	George Teale
Don Guzman Brid'oison, <i>a judge</i>	Jim Young
Doublemain, <i>his clerk</i>	George Westmoreland
Ushers/Servants	James Hayes & Dennis Stevenson
Villagers/Bridesmaids	Jean Armitage, Susan Brightbart, Jean Blundell, Vivian Bird, Joyce King, Gillian Thresh
Musicians	Pupils of Lawnswood School Louise Reasbeck, Caroline Rhodes, trained by Lynne Hudson

In this production the part of Cherubin is played as usual by a girl.

FOR THE ARTS CENTRE

Stage Manager	George Westmoreland
Assistant Stage Manager	Jim Young
Prompt	Christine Wilson
Properties	Jean Blundell and Joyce King
Wardrobe	Margaret Rhodes, Elsie Bell & Beatrice Askey
Sound	Gordon Carlin
Front of House	Malcolm and Monica Brown
Box Office	John Pemberton

Set and Countess's costume designed by Malcolm Brown.

FOR THE CIVIC THEATRE

Theatre Manager	Fred Mower
Theatre Technicians	Nick Morris, Peter Waddicor

Directed by MARGARET RHODES

LEEDS ARTS CENTRE

Leeds Arts Centre was formed in 1945 as an amateur Society to encourage and foster interest in the arts.

The Drama Group mounts five productions — usually including a musical or revue type show — at the Civic Theatre.

The Green Room Group puts on plays and other forms of entertainment in the rehearsal rooms to give members valuable experience of acting and producing before tackling major parts or productions in the Civic Theatre. Season ticket holders are welcome to attend these performances.

The Fine Arts Group meets twice each week throughout the year for drawing, painting and other creative work.

In addition there is a variety of social activities for members, such as theatre visits, outings, parties, etc.

New Members are always welcome so if you are interested in acting, drawing, painting (pictures or scenery), set building, making costumes, helping back stage, front of house or even with publicity and think you might like to join the Centre, or would like more information please write to:

*The Secretary, Leeds Arts Centre,
Stansfeld Chambers, Great George Street,
Leeds 1.*

costume hire

You may not realise that the costumes you have seen tonight and countless others from different periods are available for hire from the Leeds Arts Centre costume collection at reasonable rates.

If you are interested please telephone Leeds 756796 and discuss your requirements with Mrs. Margaret Rhodes, our wardrobe mistress.