



OPERA
IN
SCHOOLS

THE
BARBER
OF SEVILLE

The
Florentine
Opera

Opera Resource Guide

A Note to Teachers

Dear Educators,

Welcome! Thank you so much for choosing us to be a part of your school year. We are certain that you will find our program, ***The Barber of Seville***, to be engaging and fulfilling for everyone who sees it! We have included some information about our Florentine Education mission and how our education materials will benefit your students.

We encourage you to take advantage of our electronic format and share the opera guide with students and other colleagues. We would also like to encourage you to **fill out the teacher evaluation**. Your input is very important to us as we continue to implement arts education in schools.

In addition to the tour of *The Barber of Seville* at the Florentine Opera this season, we encourage you to look into our other education and community engagement programs. Please visit www.florentineopera.org for more information on our Opera Inside Out, Opera Up Close, and Community Circle!

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding the performance, the study guide, or the Florentine Opera.

Thanks again and we look forward to seeing you this year!

Renata Herrera
Education and Community Engagement Manager

The
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Some quick facts about *The Barber of Seville* to get you started:

The opera was written by Gioachino Rossini in 1816. Our Florentine Studio Artists will perform the music in Italian, the original language! The English dialogue was added by Opera Australia to help English-speaking students understand the story.

The Florentine's performance will be 45 minutes long. Students will enjoy the highlights of the originally 3-hour-long opera.

Barber School Tour 2023 Teacher Feedback Form

The Florentine Opera Company is dedicated to bringing the enjoyment and appreciation of the opera to all audiences and has a particular interest in introducing young audiences to this rich medium. Thank you for taking a few minutes to share your feedback. Your comments will help in further developing our programs and educational materials. You can [click here to access the form](#).

Barber School Tour Preview Video

[Click on this link](#) to access the preview video for our 2023 Opera in Schools tour! You can find videos of past student productions at florentineopera.org/operaforschools.

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Why The Florentine?

The Florentine Education team understands that educators juggle lesson planning, supplementary activities, and the personalities and needs of all of their students. We strive to make arts engagement easy and fun, for teachers and students.

The mission of the Florentine Opera Company Education Department is to make opera more inviting and approachable by:

- Providing resources and materials for in-classroom use to support an introduction to opera.
- Creating accessible opportunities for students to engage with live performances in their community, both at school and in our performing spaces.
- Connecting the artists on our stage to the future performers and audience members in your classrooms.

Why opera education?

- Our in-school programs present material through visual, aural, and action methods, thus reaching out to many different types of learners.
- Exposure to opera as a multidisciplinary art helps students develop intelligence in a variety of areas, including abstract thinking and problem solving.
- Opera provides opportunities for self-expression through a variety of forms, which in turn leads to the development of valuable communication skills, self-discipline, perseverance, and leadership.
- Opera combines drama, poetry, instrumental music, singing, scenery, costumes, lighting, and many wonderful special effects. Such collaboration is important for students to witness, as it helps to encourage them to develop a broadened, multidisciplinary perspective.

“With my lifestyle and the way I was brought up, I would have never been naturally introduced to the opera. I can replace movies with the opera, I can relax at the opera, I can get away from the world at the opera.” – student at West Bend High School

“They made me laugh through the whole show. I think they should come again so we can see another show. All the kids were enjoying it.” – student at Honey Creek School

About this Study Guide

Why Being an Opera Novice Helps You Enjoy Opera

We firmly believe that newcomers have a great advantage over many opera fanatics worldwide. The composers of the great operas knew what they were doing – they created potent musical dramas aimed straight for the heart. More than many other art forms, opera is meant to appeal directly to the senses. To fully appreciate an opera, all you need are eyes, ears, and a soul. Let us help you activate your senses!

The Popular-versus-Classical Myth

Until very recently (at least in geological terms), going to an opera was like going to a movie. People went to an opera as you might go to a rock concert: to have fun! They went to see their favorite stars and hear their favorite tunes. They wore casual clothes; they brought along food and drinks; they even cheered (or booed, or threw flowers or tomatoes) during the show if the spirit moved them. Classical music back then *was* pop music.

In fact, when Verdi wrote *Otello*, the crowd went crazy, calling him back to the stage over and over again with standing ovations, finally carrying him all the way home on their shoulders, and then serenading him under his window. Opera is just as entertaining as it ever was. But these days, it has become much less familiar.

~adapted from [Opera for Dummies](#)

What is Opera?

Before defining opera, ask your students to share their ideas about what opera could be. Write “opera” on the board and list their answers beneath it. Here are some possible discussion starting points.

What is opera?

An opera is simply a play in which people sing. In most operas, all the words are sung, and none are spoken. There are other types of operas, however, in which there is as much speaking as singing.

About this Study Guide

If an opera is just a play, then why do people sing?

The theater has been around for hundreds of years. People were being entertained by plays long before television and radio were even invented. Music was added to enhance the feelings that were being portrayed on the stage. Singing is a very special form of music because the instrument (like our feelings) comes from inside. Our voice is a part of us which expresses how we feel, whether we sing, talk, shout, laugh, cry, moan, growl, whisper, gasp, hiss, etc. It is the actor's job to express such feelings, and singing is a perfect way of doing just that. Naturally, singing was used very early in the history of the theater; however, opera as we know it is only about 400 years old. Opera powerfully combines drama of the theater with music – vocal and instrumental – to create the lasting art form that is enjoyed throughout the world today.

From opera to musical theater, to music videos and everything in between – the length of musical performances is considerably shorter today than it was in the past.

How is this a reflection of society today compared to hundreds of years ago?

Is it harder for us today to sit through a three-hour-long opera than it was for people back in the 1800s? Why or why not?

The Story of the Barber of Seville

The Florentine Opera for Schools touring production of *The Barber of Seville* is an abridged version of Gioachino Rossini's opera by the same name (in Italian, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*). Originally in four acts, Rossini's "slapstick" opera has a storyline that would be equally at home in a Hollywood rom-com.

The Barber of Seville is full of great tunes that are all familiar, including the fast and lively overture and Figaro's famous aria "Make way for the servant who does everything" ("Largo al factotum"). Rossini's overture is perfectly matched for a high-speed cartoon chase: *Looney Tunes* released a classic cartoon episode called "[The Rabbit of Seville](#)" in 1950. After chasing him around, Bugs Bunny manages to give Elmer Fudd a clean shave to the soundtrack of Rossini's overture.

Created by Opera Australia, the adaptation that students will experience during the 2023 Opera for Schools tour maintains the arias in the original Italian language. The scenes are tied together by recognizable instrumental melodies and witty dialogue in English. Students will enjoy a 45 minute adaptation of the originally 3-hour opera.

***The Barber of Seville*: Adapted by Opera Australia** **Run time: 45 minutes + 10 minute Q&A**

Figaro, the barber of Seville, explains how he runs this town.

Count Almaviva is in love with Rosina, niece of the grumpy Aunty Bartola, and comes to serenade her. He pretends to be the poor student Lindoro in hopes to make her love him for himself - not his money. Knowing the Count only as Lindoro, Rosina writes to him. Aunty Bartola is suspicious that someone is lurking below the balcony. The Count asks Figaro for assistance and Figaro declares that he can get Almaviva into the house, disguised as a soldier seeking lodging.

Inside the house, Figaro asks Rosina to write a few encouraging words to Lindoro, which she has actually already written. The Count Almaviva arrives in his soldier disguise, only to discover that Aunty Bartola is exempt from housing the military. Almaviva slips a note to Rosina, which Aunty Bartola sees, but Rosina smartly hands over a



The Story of the Barber of Seville

shopping list instead. The noise from the ensuing confusion attracts the “police”, really Figaro in disguise. Figaro “arrests” the “soldier”.

Count Almaviva again appears at Aunty Bartola’s house, this time disguised as the substitute music teacher. Aunty Bartola dozes off during the lesson and Figaro wheels her off into the next room. Donna Basilia, Rosina’s regular teacher, appears but is told to go home because she looks so ill. Figaro distracts Aunt Bartola while the Count escapes, promising that he will be back at midnight to elope with Rosina. When Aunty Bartola wakes up the next morning, she realizes Rosina is gone. The newlyweds re-enter and Almaviva reveals his true identity. Initially angry, Aunty Bartola realizes that if her niece is happy, then she is happy. The opera concludes with an anthem to love.

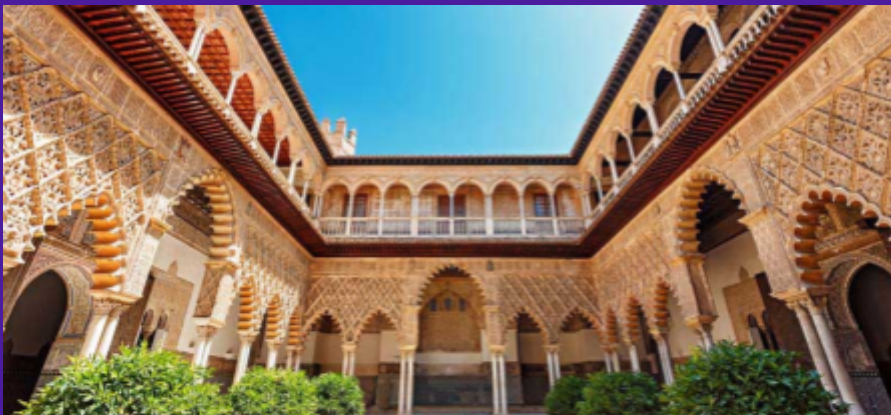


The Story of the Barber of Seville

Activity: Design the Set

As a set designer, your job is to bring a story to life by creating the backdrop for the action. *Barber of Seville's* Fine Artist collaborator [Rosy Petri](#) is a local Milwaukee artist who likes to use fabrics to create beautiful images. For this project, she studied architecture and art from Seville, Spain. She was inspired by the bright colors, bold patterns, and fun textures that can be found in the city of Seville!

Using inspiration from the images below, can you design your own set for *Barber of Seville*?
(A blank coloring page for you to design the set is on the following page.)



Alcazar palace in Seville, Spain



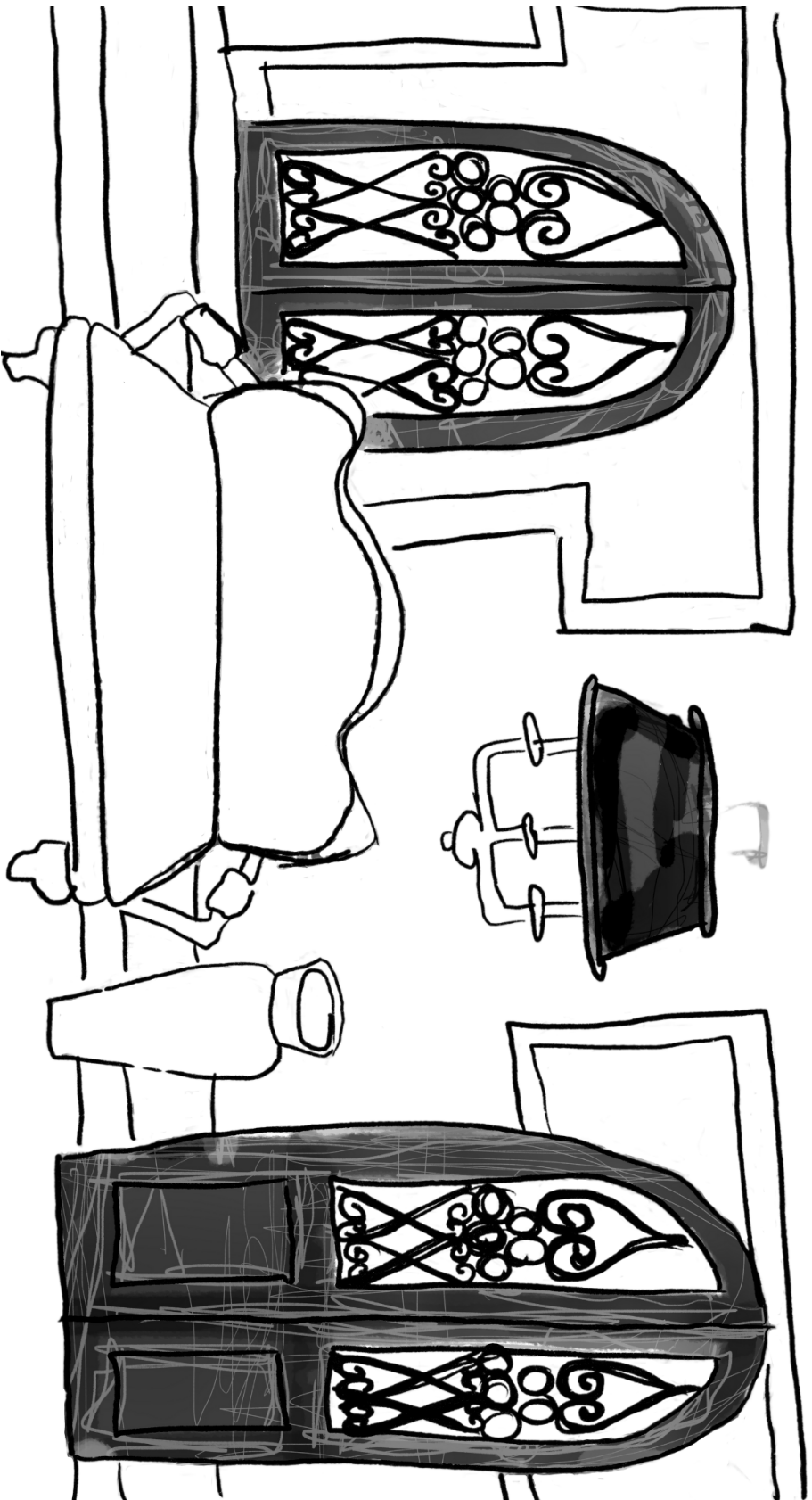
Rosy's sketch



Rosy's selection of fabrics

Activity: Design the Set

Using Rosy's sketch, design the set for Barber of Seville.



Meet the Cast

We asked the big questions you wanted to know about the cast of *Barber of Seville*!



Laura McCauley (she/her): Aunty Bartola / Donna Basilia

Where are you from? Raised in Philadelphia, born in Uzbekistan

Where have you sung/performed? I've sung with companies in New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Chicago, and now Milwaukee

What's your favorite food? Pickles or Mike and Ikes

What's your favorite holiday? Thanksgiving

What do you do for fun? I love spinning, watching Eagles football, and cuddling with my pets

Do you play any instruments? Flute and cello

Do you have any pets? A cat, Kipling and a dog, Molly

Interesting fact about yourself? I was adopted



Patrick Bessenbacher (he/him): Count Almaviva

Where are you from? I'm from Overland Park, KS, which is a suburb of Kansas City, MO.

Where have you sung/performed? I've sung in NYC, Colorado, northern Vermont, St. Louis, Kansas City, I did a choir tour with my high school in Italy, and Wisconsin, of course.

What's your favorite food? I really love food in general, but I adore Kansas City BBQ, Italian cuisine and especially seafood, specifically shellfish and fresh tuna.

What's your favorite holiday? I'm a Christmas boy at heart. The holiday season, the music, family and friends, it's always my favorite time of year. Not to mention winter is my favorite season too.

What do you do for fun? I like to play video games and pickup basketball, but I also play a little guitar and make other music on the side. I also love watching sports.

Do you play any instruments? A little guitar and just enough piano to get through college courses, but otherwise no, I wasn't super gifted in that way.

Do you have any pets? No pets, but I absolutely love animals. Once my life is a little more stable I will definitely get either a cat or dog.

Interesting fact about yourself? I went to college in Boulder, Colorado and got really good at skiing in the process. I even got to ski alongside some Olympic backcountry skiers!

Meet the Cast



Tzytle Steinman (she/her): Rosina

Where are you from? San Diego, CA

Where have you sung/performed? Florentine Opera, Fargo-Moorhead Opera, San Diego Opera, Ohio Light Opera, Sarasota Opera and Utah Festival Opera.

What's your favorite food? Thai food

What's your favorite holiday? Chrismukkah

What do you do for fun? Hike, bake, play my switch, make TikTok's and work out

Do you play any instruments? Piano and I tap dance

Do you have any pets? A rescue dog named Golde

Interesting fact about yourself? I have triple jointed thumbs



Zachary Crowle (he/him): Figaro

Where are you from? I am from Brooklyn, New York

Where have you sung/performed? I have sung in Boston, New Hampshire, Arkansas, Michigan, Wisconsin, Australia, and Austria.

What's your favorite food? I love Thai food!

What's your favorite holiday? You can't beat Thanksgiving. It's the coziest holiday.

What do you do for fun? I do a lot of writing. I also like to run, play guitar, and play video games

Do you play any instruments? I play guitar, saxophone, and a little piano

Do you have any pets? I have two cats named Woody and Arlo after Woody and Arlo Guthrie.

Interesting fact about yourself? I learned how to juggle and ride a unicycle to be in a musical in elementary school. Now I can juggle knives and torches!



Edward Forstman (they/them): Pianist

Where are you from? I am from Birmingham, Alabama.

Where have you sung/performed? I've performed in lots of places, from Kyiv, Ukraine, to the museums of Chicago and Milwaukee, and Carnegie Hall in New York City.

What's your favorite food? My favorite kind of food is Indian food, and I usually get a spicy curry.

What's your favorite holiday? Thanksgiving is my favorite holiday for all the relaxed family time, great food, and autumn weather.

What do you do for fun? I love to rock climb and boulder.

Do you play any instruments? Besides the piano, I also play organ and harpsichord, and learned viola and french horn when I was in school.

Do you have any pets? I have an adorable, chatty black cat named Jiji.

Interesting fact about yourself? I've eaten a Carolina Reaper pepper, the spiciest kind in the world, whole.

WEBSITES FOR MUSIC EDUCATORS

Opera Websites

www.florentineopera.org - Learn more about Florentine's Opera in Schools Tour, Opera Inside Out, and Opera Up Close education programs.

www.operaamerica.org/notes - OPERA America's National Opera Teacher and Educator Source (NOTES) offers a catalogue of exemplary opera learning materials developed by opera companies across North America.

Arts in Education Websites

<https://www.aep-arts.org/> - Arts Education Partnership - A national network of more than 100 organizations dedicated to advancing arts education.

<https://www.kennedy-center.org/education> - The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts - Professional development for educators. Summer intensives for young artists. Teaching artist guided activities. Performances for young audiences. Classroom lesson plans. Arts-focused digital media.

www.aate.com - American Alliance for Theatre and Education - COVID-19 resources, internship opportunities and volunteer opportunities.

www.theperformingartsalliance.org - Performing Arts Alliance advocacy toolkit contains helpful information for connecting with lawmakers and building relationships that encourage their understanding of and commitment to our sector.

<https://nafme.org/> - National Association for Music Education members have provided these resources from their own original teaching experiences, music educators in their school districts, universities, communities, peers, or other trusted sources.

www.exploratorium.edu/music - Interactive website for music and science featuring online exhibits, movies, and questions.

The Florentine Opera