
TEATRUM
MANOEL



1732

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THE MANOEL THEATRE

presents

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

Libretto by Lorenzo da Ponte
Based on Le Mariage de Figaro by Beaumarchais

music by
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Culman Pearce
Conductor ~~RONALD~~ PEARCE

Director JAMES ROSS

Set Designs ALAN GILCHRIST

Costume Designs BERMANS INTERNATIONAL LTD

19, 20 November 1991

THE FIGARO STORY

ACT I

When the curtain rises, Susanna is discovered before the looking-glass. Figaro is measuring out a space on the floor (*Cinque, dieci*). The room, Figaro explains, is to be theirs — 'the most convenient room in the castle, just between milord and milady'. Susanna astounds him by peremptorily refusing to accept it, but, when he remonstrates (*Se a caso Madama*) she explains that the position may make it easy for her to go to Countess but it also makes it easy for the Count to get to her. The Countess rings, and Figaro is left alone to contemplate a situation that is by no means to his liking. Marcellina comes in with Don Bartolo, the pair of them hatching a plot which shall compel Figaro to marry Marcellina as he has defaulted on a debt he owes her. Doctor Bartolo, with his legal knowledge, will ensure that there is no escape for the rascal (*La vendetta*). As he goes out of one door, Susanna enters by another and she and Marcellina meet as they attempt to follow Bartolo; their duet as each offers the other precedence ends in Marcellina's complete discomfiture. Susanna stays behind and is immediately confronted with a disconsolate Cherubino, who wants to enlist her help in getting the Count to reinstate him as the Countess's page. No one takes him seriously except himself. He is just at the wrong age: young enough to be allowed liberties, old enough to take advantage of them (as has happened over his latest exploit with Barbarina, for which he has been dismissed) in a way that cannot be tolerated. He is in love with every woman he comes across, and pours out his adolescent aspirations to Susanna in an aria, *Non sò più cosa son, cosa faccio*. Voices are heard outside and he has only just time to conceal himself before the Count comes into Susanna's room and starts to protest his affections. It is not her lucky day, as the Count is followed a moment or two later by Basilio. In the scramble for concealment, Cherubino nips into the chair behind which the Count takes refuge. Basilio teases Susanna with gossip about Cherubino and when she will not listen, presses her about the page and the Countess — an intrigue which he says everyone is talking about. The Count can bear it no longer and emerges from his hiding-place to demand that the gossip-mongers shall be found and punished. Susanna faints, but revives in time to plead the cause of the unhappy Cherubino. The Count describes how he caught him the previous day hiding in Barbarina's room. Suiting the action to the word, he draws the cover from the chair — and there is Cherubino again.

Led by Figaro, a band of peasants comes in to sing the Count's praises, the Count yields to the general entreaties, but only to the extent of giving Cherubino a commission in his regiment. Figaro speeds him on his way with a spirited description of what his future life has in store for him.

ACT II

We are introduced to the Countess in a soliloquy, *Porgi amor* which explains her tense longing for her husband's love, and also of the reticence which her breeding makes natural to her. Susanna explains the situation to her and opens the door to Figaro; his plan is that the Count shall be given an assignation with Susanna, whose place shall be taken by Cherubino, and that at the same time he shall be told in an anonymous letter that the Countess in her turn has made a rendezvous with an unknown man. Cherubino comes in to see if he can be dressed for the part, but first sings the song he has just composed, *Voi che sapete*. Cherubino tries on the dress to the accompaniment of a song: *Venite inginocchiatevi*. No sooner is it ended and Cherubino safely buttoned up than a knock is heard at the door. It is the Count. Consternation. Cherubino dashes into the Countess's bedroom and Susanna hides behind a curtain. The Count is suspicious of his wife's all too obvious nervousness, and a suspicion that something is being hidden from him becomes certainty when he hears a noise and finds the door of her room locked. He takes his wife with him as he goes off to get the tools to break the door down. While he is away Cherubino slips out of hiding and jumps from the window, leaving Susanna to take his place. The count is furious when the Countess tries to explain that Cherubino is in her room without much on because he was being fitted for a charade.

The great finale is begun by the Count: *Esci omai, garzon malnato*. The Countess's pleading seems to be in vain, but both are struck dumb with amazement when, at the height of the storm, Susanna emerges coolly from the inner room. The Count rushes in but not finding Cherubino he can do nothing but sue for pardon. With Susanna's aid, this is obtained. The anonymous letter? Written by Figaro, delivered by Basilio. He thinks he has found someone he can safely be angry with, but is told he must forgive everyone if he himself is to be forgiven for his jealousy. Figaro comes in to summon his master and mistress to the wedding dance. The Count sees a chance of getting his own back and questions Figaro about the anonymous letter. In spite of hints from the Countess and Susanna, Figaro denies all knowledge of it when Antonio, the gardener, bursts in, protesting that they have thrown a man out of the window on to his flower-beds. Figaro says that it was he who jumped out, but Antonio thinks it looked more like the page. Figaro sticks to his story until the Count catechises him about a paper Antonio says was dropped near the flower-bed. Figaro searches his pockets and racks his brains, and in the nick of time the Countess recognises it and whispers to Figaro that it is the page's commission. It is only just in time that the Countess remembers that it has not been sealed. Figaro's triumph is short-lived, as Marcellina comes in, supported by Bartolo and Basilio, to lodge a formal complaint before the Count against Figaro for breach of promise. The act comes to an end in pandemonium.

ACT III

Susanna comes to borrow smelling salts for her mistress. She agrees to meet the Count that night in the garden. As she leaves the room, she meets Figaro and assures him, that he is now sure of winning his case against Marcellina. It is later discovered, after the count has given judgment for Marcellina, that the lady is in fact none other than Figaro's mother. The Countess comes in and gives audible expression to a situation which can only be resolved with Susanna's aid. The mistress dictates a letter to the Count and the maid takes it down. The Count comes in with Antonio, to see one of the guests unmasked as Cherubino. Figaro announces the beginning of the wedding march, the so-called Fandango. The happy couples — Bartolo and Marcellina as well as Figaro and Susanna — receive their wedding wreaths from the Count and Countess, Susanna taking the opportunity to give the Count the letter she and her mistress have concocted for him. He opens it, pricking his finger on the pin. The Count announces general festivity and the act ends with a repetition of the chorus in his honour.

ACT IV

Barbarina has been given the pin which sealed the letter to return to Susanna, but has lost it. She tells the story to Figaro, who comes in with Marcellina and is overcome with distress at this apparent indication of his wife's unfaithfulness.

Figaro watches Barbarina hide in one of the arbours and tells Bartolo and Basilio that they are to stay near at hand to witness the seduction of his wife by the Count. Susanna asks the Countess to be allowed to walk a little apart from her, knowing fully well that Figaro is listening to her. Cherubino attempts to flirt with what he thinks is Susanna. Susanna, the Count, and Figaro observe, and the Count interrupts and starts to make love to his wife in disguise. Figaro does not know about the change of clothes and it is his turn to interrupt. Susanna calls to him and he starts to tell her of the Count's escapade when he recognises that it is in fact Susanna he is talking to. Figaro makes love to her as if she were the Countess, and then laughs at her attempt to disguise herself from him. All is forgiven and the two combine to make the Count think their extravagant love-making is in reality that of mistress and valet. The Count cites the unfaithfulness of his wife, and in succession hauls Cherubino, Barbarina, Marcellina, and the supposed culprit from the arbour in which they have taken refuge. The dramatic suddenness of the countess' entry combines with the Count's noble phrase of contrition as he begs forgiveness, receives it, and the opera ends in general rejoicing.

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

Count Almaviva
Figaro, *his valet*
Doctor Bartolo
Don Basilio, *a music-master*
Cherubino, *a page*
Antonio, *a gardener*
Don Curzio, *counsellor at law*
Countess Almaviva
Susanna, *her personal maid*
Marcellina, *a duenna*
Barbarina, *Antonio's niece*

Josip Lesaja
Karl Morgan Dayton
Aurio Tomicich
Kevin West
Carol Rowlands
Noel Galea
Samuel Bezzina
Virginia Kerr
Deborah Rees
Marie Therese Vassallo
Karen Camilleri

Time:
Eighteenth Century

Location:
The Count's château of Aguas Frescas, near Seville

Chorus:
(members of I-Għaqda Kantanti Lirici Maltin)
Reginald Schembri, Harold Mallja Zarb, John R. Gatt,
John Midolo, Edward Mifsud, Raymond Camilleri,
Anne Vella Zarb, Catherine Gauci, Simone Attard,
Josephine Falzon, Mary Zammit.

Children:
Bremice Portelli, Joseline Catania, John Mizzi

THE MANOEL THEATRE ORCHESTRA

Leader George Spiteri

Conductor Colman Pearce

There will be two intervals of fifteen minutes each.

BACKSTAGE

Stage Manager: **Tony Cassar Darien**

A.S.M.: **Guzè Gatt**

Stagehands: **Mario Dalli**
Joseph Zahra

Set designs: **Alan Gilchrist**

Constructed by: **Frans Mifsud**
Emmanuel Dalli

Painted by: **Augusto Cardinale**

Wardrobe Mistress: **Connie Schembri**

Assisted by: **Anna Vella**
Jeanette Theuma

Lighting: **Vanni Laus**

Chorus master: **John Galea**

Ripetiteur: **John Galea**

Children's minder: **May Vassallo**

Make-up: **Lina Galea Cumbo**

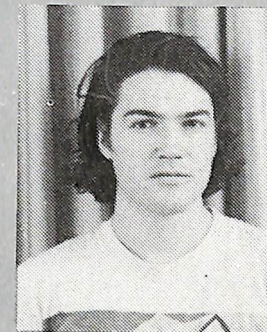
Hairstylist: **Michael Galea**

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Peter V. Calamatta, The Garden Shop, San Gwann;
Gio Batta Delia (1890) & Sons, Valletta.
Osborne Hotel, Valletta

KARL MORGAN DAYMOND won a scholarship at the Guildhall School of Music from where he graduated in 1989. He won the School's British Song Prize, the Novello Scholarship and the Polonsky Foundation Award.

With Brecon Opera he has appeared as *Colline* and *Schaunard* whilst with Pimlico Opera he sang *Bartolo* and several parts in Purcell's *The Fairy Queen*. Roles at the Guildhall Opera School include *Le Negre* in Ibert's *Angelique*, *Pepe* in *La Vida Breve*, *Kalenik* in *The May Night*, *Sancho* in *Don Quixote*. He was responsible for the song interludes in Sir Peter Hall's production of *The Merchant of Venice*. Last year he sang *Figaro* for British Youth Opera which was extremely well received. His repertoire includes most of the important oratorio parts such as *Telemann's St. Luke Passion*, *Mozart's* and *Schumann's Requiem* and *Bach's Magnificat*. His keen theatrical interest includes composition and conducting for Theatre West Glamorgan, the Soapbox Theatre Company and the Anna Scher Theatre.



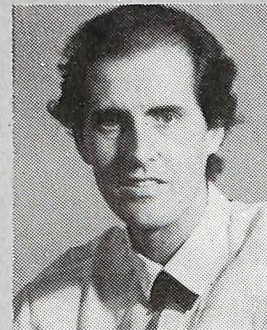
Irish soprano, **VIRGINIA KERR**, is rated as one of her country's finest singers. She started her singing career in the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin and has since performed extensively both at home and abroad.

Miss Kerr is no stranger to Malta as she has taken part in the local production of *Verdi's Requiem* and *Beethoven's 9th Symphony* with Mrs. Joseph Vella, wherein she was acclaimed as Ireland's Queen of Song in the local press. Last year she took the role of *Musetta* in the Manoel Theatre's production of *La Bohème*. She scored a huge success in Judith Weir's opera *The Vanishing Bridegroom* with Scottish Opera and will be making her Royal Opera House debut next month.



Jugoslavian born **JOSIP LESAJA** studied in Zagreb and at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. As a member of the Croatian National Opera he has sung the title roles of *Don Giovanni* and *Eugene Oregin*, *Malatesta* in *Don Pasquale*, *Figaro* in *Il Barbiere di Seviglia*. With Budapest Opera he has sang various contemporary works such as *Zajc's Richard the Third* and *Kogoj's Crne Maske* which he has also recorded for C.D.

Despite his hectic operatic career he is also a distinguished concert singer with a repertoire which includes the *Brahms's* and *Faure's Requiem*, the *St. Matthew* and *St. John Passion* by *Bach* and *Mendelssohn's Elijah* and *Paulus*.





After finishing her studies at the Royal Northern College of Music and winning the first prize at the 1978 edition of the Maggie Teyte International Singing Competition **DEBORAH REES** made her debut singing Ilia in *Idomeneo* for Kent Opera.

She has appeared with the Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera, ENO, New Sadlers Wells and Netherlands Opera. Her roles include Susanna in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Sevilla in *La Clemenza di Tito*, Sophie in *Werther* amongst others. She has worked with many celebrated conductors like Simon Rattle, Jeffrey Tate and Andrew Davis.

Her recordings include Jacques Loussier's mass *Lumieres* and various Gilbert and Sullivan roles with the new D'Oyly Carte Company.



CAROL ROWLANDS was born in Newcastle and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music. She was a member of Scottish Opera from 1982-1989 and there sung numerous small roles including Inez in *Il Trovatore*; Annina in *La Traviata*; third boy in *Magic Flute*; Beggar Woman *Death in Venice*; the Page in *Salome*; Kate Pinkerton in *Madam Butterfly*. Since going freelance in 1989 she has performed, for Scottish Opera: *Regina* (title role); Wattraute *Die Walkure*; Santuzza (an extensive Opera-Go-Round tour of *Cavalleria Rusticana*); Isle of Man: Suzuki *Madam Butterfly*; Opera South: Santuzza; Opera West: The Mother *Amahl and the Night Visitors*; John Currie Singers: *Orfeo Orfeo ed Euridice*, in concert; University College London: *Tigrana Edgar*.

Future plans include Marcellina in Scottish Opera's forthcoming *Marriage of Figaro*.

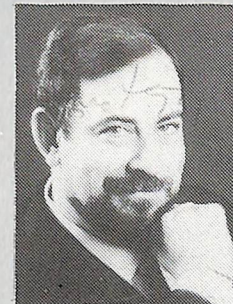
KEVIN WEST has worked with ENO, Kent Opera, Opera Northern Ireland, Opera Factory the English National Contemporary Opera Studio, Opera Restor'd and the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company. After graduating from Guildhall he has appeared in various roles like Sellem, *The Rake's Progress*, Don Ottavio, *Don Giovanni*, Peter Quint and Prologue, *The Turn of the Screw*, David, *The Mastersingers*, amongst others.

Last year saw him in the lead role of Bruno Maderna's *Satyricon* and Hans Werner Henze's *The English Cat* which was filmed for television. He is scheduled to play the Father in John Hawkins' Opera *Alice* at the Garden Venture.

Mr. West also specialises in the field of baroque music and has never neglected the concert circuit with a repertoire which includes works by Handel, Bach, Mozart and Schubert besides modern works by Tippett and Geoffrey Grey.



Triestan bass **AURIO TOMICICH** made his debut with the role of Fiesco in Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* at the Teatro Lirico Sperimentale di Spoleto and since has performed extensively in Europe and the Americas in major opera houses under the baton of many famous conductors including Gavazzeni, Sawallisch and Pradella. Last year he appeared as Colline in *La Bohème* at the Manoel Theatre.



MARIE THERESE VASSALLO studied singing, guitar and violin with her father. Her operatic roles include Beppe in *l'Amico Fritz*, Suzuki in *Madame Butterfly* and others in Pace's *Ipogea* and *Caterina Desguanez*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Manon Lescaut* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

She is very much in demand for concert and oratorio appearances which include Dvorak's, Pergolesi's and Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Mendelssohn's *Paulus*, Mozart's *Requiem* and *Coronation Mass*, Bruckner's *Re Deum* and others.

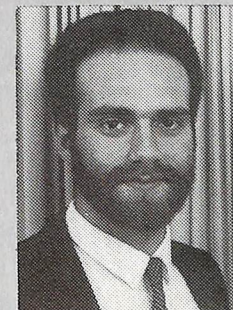
Ms. Vassallo has been abroad on several singing engagements. In Italy she won the Festival del Vulcano d'Oro twice, the Theatre del Grappolo d'Oro and the Festival della *Canzone Mediterranea*.



Following his 1989 debut at the Maltafest Debutantes concert **SAMUEL BEZZINA** has sung Poisson in *Adriana Lecouvreur*, Vincenzo Dimech in Pace's *I Martiri* and Colin in Nicolo Isouard's *Jeannot et Colin*.



A regular soloist of the Gozitan choir *Chorus Urbanus* **NOEL GALEA** has interpreted Dr Grenvil in *La Traviata* and Don Alfonso in *Così Fan Tutte*. Last year he appeared at the Sala Nervi in the presence of pope John Paul II. His appearances with Opera Studio have drawn a consistent critical appraisal.



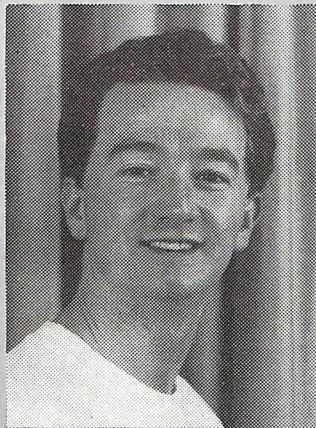


KAREN CAMILLERI studied with Bice Ciappara. Amongst her various concerts she has sung in two oratorios, by Joseph Vella and Albert Borg respectively. As a member of the Għaqda Kantanti Liriċi Maltin, she has sang in the chorus of various operas and as a soloist in *Madam Butterfly*. She appeared in two Valletta Dramatic Company's operettas at the Manoel Theatre.

COLMAN PEARCE has made a huge contribution to the shaping of Irish musical life. He has worked with Radio Telefis Eireann (radio/tv, Ireland) since the start of his professional conducting career becoming its principal conductor in 1981. He was responsible for introducing TRE's audiences to various contemporary works and as artistic director of the Carrolls Summer Music festival has commissioned a considerable number of new works. His engagements have taken him to all over Europe and North and South America.

Besides conducting, Mr. Pearce is a pianist of excellent sensitivity and is renowned for accompanying artists as Henry Szeryng, Pascal Rogé, Kyun-Wha-Chung, Heather Harper, Andrew Schiff and Hans Holliger.

Mr. Pearce is presently the principal conductor and music director of the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra.



JAMES ROSS, after graduating in Speech and Drama from Edinburgh, worked as an actor, stage and company manager for The Scottish Theatre Company, Scottish Television, Scottish Opera and the Edinburgh International Festival. He was the Assistant director on the 1986 award-winning production *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaities*.

As production manager to the Boston Symphony Orchestra he collaborated closely with conductor/composer John Williams and Seiji Ozawa. In England he has established the companies *Performance Exchange* and *Music Theatre Lab*, besides having worked extensively with the regional opera companies.

James Ross is currently producing Mozart's *Bastien et Bastienne* and *The Impresario* in Glasgow.

MOZART'S FINEST HOUR

During the spring and summer of 1785 Mozart had started work on *The Marriage of Figaro*, and was so excited by it that he had little time to do anything else. The opera was based on a play by Beaumarchais which had been enormously popular in Paris two years before. The story was about a poor writer called Figaro who in order to earn his living became a barber and valet to an aristocratic Spaniard. In the play, Figaro's most important speech is:

My lord Count, because you're a great aristocrat, you think yourself a great genius!... Nobility, fortune, rank, influence, all that makes one so proud! What did you do to earn so many advantages? You just gave yourself the trouble of being born and nothing more: for the rest, you're rather a commonplace person. Whereas I, lost in the common herd, have had to use more thinking and scheming to get on than has been spent governing the whole of Spain for the past hundred years!

This was a familiar feeling for Mozart too, and he was the ideal person to make the play into an opera. The libretto was by Lorenzo da Ponte, a flamboyant, energetic Italian poet to whom the Emperor had just given the post of official theatre poet. He was the best librettist in Vienna — witty, lively, and an excellent foil for Mozart. They worked well together, and formed a lasting and fruitful partnership; Mozart's three great Italian operas, *Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan Tutte*, all had libretti by Da Ponte.

Mozart worked at top speed on *Figaro*, composing at the same time other music for his concerts — concertos and arias, as well as an operetta in honour of an important court occasion.

After various delays *Figaro* was due to have its first performance on 28 April. Mozart was nervous, because his Italian enemies among the court musicians, led by Salieri, were determined to make the opera fail. They were all jealous of Mozart's increasing fame and reputation, and he knew they would stick at nothing. There were two other operas, one by Salieri, ready for presentation, and each composer claimed the right to be first in the season. Mozart was so angry at all the intrigues that he swore he would burn his opera if it was not done first. In the end the Emperor decided on *Figaro*, to the fury of the Italians, and the opera went straight into rehearsal at last.

One of the singers was the Irishman Michael Kelly, who has left us long descriptions of the rehearsals and first performance of *Figaro*.

All the original performers had the advantage of the instruction of the composer, who transfused into their minds his inspired meaning. I never shall forget his little animated countenance, when lighted up with the glowing rays of genius — it is as impossible to describe it as it would be to paint sunbeams.

During all the rehearsals, Mozart was darting about in the wings, calling out 'Bravo! Bravo!' when someone sang an aria particularly well.

Then at last came the *première*, and in spite of all the vicious plotting of the Italians, it was a magnificent success.

'At the end of the opera, I thought the audience would never have done applauding and calling for Mozart; almost every piece was encored, which prolonged it nearly to the length of three operas (it already lasts at least 4 hours!) and induced the Emperor to issue an order on the second representation that no piece of music should be encored. Never was anything more complete than the triumph of Mozart.

Figaro was repeated nine times between May and December. Then another opera was performed by someone else which was just as great a success, and Mozart's *Figaro* was forgotten by the fickle Viennese public for the next two years.

In fact, not Vienna but Prague, in Bohemia, was the first city to recognize Mozart's true genius and treat him accordingly. In Vienna there were other great composers, Gluck and Haydn leading them, and Mozart was just regarded as one of many. But in Prague he was regarded as the greatest of all, from the moment the people of Prague heard *Seraglio* in 1783 they had ears for no other composer. When *Figaro* was first given in Prague in December 1786 it created a greater sensation than any opera ever had before. The theatre was packed out, performance after performance; people even threw poems down from the gallery on to the stage in praise of the work and the singers.

When Mozart heard of this triumph he decided to go to Prague at once. *Yesterday, January 11; our great and beloved composer, Herr Mozart, arrived here from Vienna*, announced a Prague newspaper. From then on Prague could not see or hear enough of Mozart. Overwhelmed, he wrote to a friend in Vienna: '*Here they talk about nothing but Figaro. Nothing is played, sung or whistled but Figaro. No opera is drawing like Figaro. Certainly a great honour for me!*'

A public concert was arranged, and was packed to over-flowing. The audience went mad at the end and the applause was quite deafening. Mozart, very moved, sat down again at the klavier and improvised for an hour; the storm of delighted applause was even greater than before. Again Mozart improvised, finishing up with brilliant variations on the most popular song from *Figaro*. The ecstatic Bohemians roared their delight. It was a unique evening for them, and it must have been one of the finest of Mozart's musical life.

