



# Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*: A Short Guide to a Great Opera (Great Operas)

*Michael Steen*

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The première in 1816 in Rome of Gioachino Rossini's famous opera was a fiasco comparable to those of Wagner's Tannhäuser and Bizet's Carmen. But Il barbiere di Siviglia was soon recognised as being among the greatest of comic operas, comparable to those of Mozart. Even Beethoven was enthusiastic.

Figaro, Seville's barber, is confident of a good pay-off for facilitating the elopement of Rosina with the Count of Almaviva. Her guardian also has designs on her and her fortune. Who will get there first? The story is based on a comedy by the French playwright Beaumarchais, whose The Marriage of Figaro was used by Mozart.

The Barber is packed with famous tunes, displaying Rossini's glittering coloratura, trademark crescendos and patter: Figaro's famous Largo al factotum and Zitti, zitti, piano, piano; the Count's serenade with guitar, Ecco ridente; Rosina's Singing Lesson and Una voce poco fa; Doctor Bartolo's patter song A un dottor; Don Basilio's La calunnia. These are just some of the ingredients of this feast of humour and good tunes.

Written by Michael Steen, author of the acclaimed The Lives and Times of the Great Composers, 'Short Guides to Great Operas' are concise, entertaining and easy to read. They are packed with useful information and informed opinion, helping to make you a truly knowledgeable opera-goer, and so maximising your enjoyment of a great musical experience.

Other 'Short Guides to Great Operas' that you may enjoy include The Marriage of Figaro, Così fan tutte and Lucia di Lammermoor.

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