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Family Plays

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

[Le Barbier de Séville, ou La Précaution Inutile]

Comedy adapted by

I.E. CLARK

Based on the plays written by

PIERRE-AUGUSTIN CARON DE BEAUMARCHAIS



THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

[Le Barbier de Séville, ou La Précaution Inutile]

To most Americans, Figaro—one of the world’s most famous rogues—is known only as a character in the great operas by Rossini and Mozart. But the composers based their operas on plays written by Pierre-Augustin Caron De Beaumarchais —plays which affected our lives directly since they and their author helped give birth to democracy through the American and French Revolutions. *The Barber of Seville* premiered February 23, 1775.

Bellow Free Academy won the top award in a Vermont state contest with this adaptation.

Comedy. Adapted by I.E. Clark. Based on the plays written by Pierre-Augustin Caron De Beaumarchais. Cast: 6m., 4w. Highly intelligent, energetic and ambitious Figaro wanted more than anything to be rich and famous so he could enjoy the splendid life of 18th century France. But he had no chance of succeeding because he was born a second-class citizen, and life for him and the other servants was so unbearable that whispers of revolt drifted through the musty air of the servants’ quarters. The tricks Figaro thinks up to get even with the aristocrats produce one of the world’s funniest comedies. This play and *The Marriage of Figaro* are the comedies upon which Rossini and Mozart based their great operas. Our adaptations, both one-act plays, provide a timely introduction to Figaro that will have your students asking to see the operas. Each play is completely enjoyable alone, or they are ideal as partners for an evening of one-act plays. Set in and around the home of Dr. Bartolo in Seville in the 18th century. *A director’s script (prompt book) is available which contains drawings of costumes and set, details on all technical aspects of staging, discussion of characterization, plot and theme. It also suggests the complete blocking and full stage directions for all movement and business. Approximate running time: 35 to 40 minutes. Code: BH8.*

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311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308
Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170
Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

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The Barber of Seville

*The Barber
of Seville*

[Le Barbier de Séville, ou La Précaution Inutile]

By BEAUMARCHAIS

Adapted into a one-act play

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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I.E. CLARK

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ABOUT THE PLAY

Figaro, one of the world's most famous rogues, was introduced to posterity on Feb. 23, 1775, with the first presentation of Beaumarchais' *The Barber of Seville*. Although he has cavorted about the stage of Europe continuously for the ensuing 200 years, Figaro has been seen in the United States almost exclusively in the famous operas by Rossini and Mozart, who set music to Beaumarchais' plays. This '*Stage Magic*' adaptation gives American directors an opportunity to present a great work of art which has not been worn out by over-exposure.

The story, a revolutionary one in 1775 and still timely in the last third of the 20th century, rises from the fact that Figaro is one of the most talented, imaginative, intelligent, capable, and ambitious persons in Seville—but he is forever excluded from success and respect for a single reason: he was not born an aristocrat. Although well educated, Figaro was unable to get a decent job; therefore, he became a barber and traveled throughout Spain, eventually ending in Seville and becoming the personal body servant of a stingy, unpleasant old reprobate named Dr. Bartolo. Unable to compete with Bartolo as an equal, Figaro gets revenge for Bartolo's inhuman treatment of his servants by playing tricks on the old miser.

An opportunity for delicious mischief rises when Count Almaviva, a former friend of Figaro's, appears. The Count, in a series of disguises, attempts to woo Bartolo's ward, Rosina. Bartolo intends to marry Rosina himself (and thus fall heir to her inheritance), and he keeps her tightly locked in his house to forestall any competition from younger, more desirable men. And so Figaro takes over with the intention of helping Count Almaviva and Rosina foil the despicable Bartolo.

The play is a bouncing comedy filled with clever plotting and carefully drawn characters. It is the kind of play that leaves a sincere message with an audience who, while the play progresses, is completely unaware that it is getting anything other than sheer entertainment.

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE

The one-act version of **Beaumarchais' *The Barber Of Seville*** presented on the following pages is based on the production script developed by I. E. Clark in adapting and directing the play at Schulenburg Texas, High School.

The Schulenburg production of this script was the first high school play to be presented at the San Antonio World's Fair, HemisFair '68. The cast was as follows:

<i>COUNT ALMA VIVA</i>	Lloyd Holz
<i>FIGARO</i>	Kurt Vornsand
<i>BARTOLO</i>	Sheldon Lippman
<i>ROSINA</i>	Carol Canuteson
<i>MARCELINA</i>	Beverly Bucek
* <i>BRIGHT EYES</i>	Patricia Davis
<i>GIRLIE</i>	Joan Schulze
<i>DON BASILIO</i>	Alan Herzik
<i>NOTARY</i>	Donald Petrash
<i>ALCALDE</i>	Jack Walker

The action takes place in and around the
home of Dr. Bartolo in Seville
in the 18th century

*Beaumarchais intended the role of Bright Eyes
to be played by a man

†

THE DIRECTOR'S PRODUCTION SCRIPT

The Director's Production Script (prompt book) available for this play contains numerous aids designed to save the director hours and hours of valuable time.

Included in the Director's Production Script are drawings of costumes, along with detailed suggestions for color, material, and other aspects of making or finding the costumes. You will also find floor plans drawn to scale; scale drawings of scenery, with suggestions for making or acquiring unusual set pieces, and suggestions for making or finding unusual props.

Also included is information on lighting, make-up, music, special effects, or whatever technicalities the play calls for.

The full text of the play is included, with detailed stage directions which show where each actor should be and what he should do all the while he is on stage. Experienced directors have used our blocking as a time-saving foundation upon which to mold their own creative ideas. Inexperienced directors have found our stage directions to be a priceless aid in solving problems of movement, picturization, focus, balance, and other aspects of staging. For the beginning director, using one of our Production Scripts is almost like having a professional director sitting beside you at rehearsals.

The Director's Production Script also contains a detailed discussion of characterization, with suggestions for helping each performer understand the role.

In the case of our one-act classics, the Director's Production Script saves the director even more time by providing well-researched information on the background, history, and significance of the play and its author.

Our Director's Production Scripts have become an indispensable tool for many theatres.

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Beaumarchais'

The Barber of Seville

Or, The Useless Precaution

Adapted by I. E. Clark

[At rise, the exterior corner of Dr. Bartolo's house is visible. Its predominant feature is a second-story window heavily shuttered. Below the window is a bench. A table and several bushes represent a garden. A mysterious figure, its features completely hidden by a huge cloak, rises suddenly from behind a bush. It is COUNT ALMAVIVA in disguise. He looks anxiously up at the second-story window of Dr. Bartolo's house.]

COUNT. It must be earlier than I thought. Oh, well, I'd rather be too early than miss seeing her the moment she appears. My friends at court should see me now—a hundred leagues from Madrid, waiting every morning under the window of a woman to whom I have never spoken. But why not? Everyone pursues his own happiness, and mine lies with Rosina. I'm tired of those easy conquests at court; I want to be loved for myself and not for my title. I hope this disguise...curse my luck, who is this intruder!

[The COUNT hides behind a bush as FIGARO is heard off-stage. He enters with paper and pencil in his hand, singing. See Production Script for music.]

FIGARO. Sorrow, go, resign,
don't eat us!
Sans the fire of wine
to heat us
Life would be cold
And even the bold
Would speedily die...

Hmmm, not bad. “Would speedily die”...? Euh! Oh, well. Nowadays we sing songs even if they don’t mean much. [*Sits on table, hums and beats time with pencil as he makes corrections on the paper. He rubs his cheek, feels a whisker, takes a straight razor from his pocket and deftly whisks it away. He takes a bottle of lotion from another pocket and rubs it on his cheek. The COUNT thinks he has gone and peeps out from behind the bush. FIGARO sees him.*] That priest looks familiar.

COUNT. [*Aside*] That man looks familiar.

[*They peep at each other again.*]

FIGARO. [*Aside*] He’s no priest. He looks like Count Almaviva.

COUNT. [*Sniffing the shaving lotion, aloud—in surprise*] I do believe it’s that rogue Figaro!

FIGARO. [*Hopping down from table and bowing*] It is indeed, my lord.

COUNT. [*Shushing him*] You imbecile, if you say one word...

FIGARO. Yes, now I’m sure I recognize you—friendly as always...your excellency.

COUNT. [*Apprehensive of eyes behind window*] Call me Lindoro, you fool! Isn’t it obvious that I’m in disguise? To avoid suspicion, let’s pretend we’re gossiping. Well, did you get that job I recommended you for?

FIGARO. Yes, my lord, the minister was so impressed by your recommendation that he made me chief assistant to a doctor.

COUNT. Ah, an army doctor?

FIGARO. No. A horse doctor.

COUNT. Wonderful. You also write verses?

FIGARO. That’s the cause of all my trouble. When someone reported to the minister that my songs were all the rage, he had me dismissed...on the grounds that an intelligent man can’t make a good hired hand.

COUNT. That’s understandable. But I remember that

when you were my servant you were something of a rascal... lazy, scatterbrained, insolent, untrustworthy...

FIGARO. A poor fellow can't be *perfect*. Besides, my lord, how many masters do you know who would make good servants?

COUNT. Touché! So you came to Seville.

FIGARO. Not immediately. I...

COUNT. [*Silencing him, looking at window*] I believe it is she! No, keep on talking.

FIGARO. First I returned to Madrid and tried my hand at writing for the theatre...

COUNT. Poor wretch!

FIGARO. I don't know why I failed there; the audience seemed to like my plays. But the critics!

COUNT. Ah, the critics. The dramatists' executioners!

FIGARO. The devil barbecue them!

COUNT. And so you left Madrid?

FIGARO. I packed my belongings in a knapsack and set out, praised by some, denounced by others; taking advantage of good weather, putting up with bad; laughing at my own misery, and cutting everybody's hair! You see me now established as a barber in Seville and ready to serve your excellency in anything it pleases you to order.

COUNT. Bravo! What has given you such a happy philosophy?

FIGARO. Why, habitual misfortune, my lord. I laugh at everything to keep from crying.

COUNT. [*Looking at window*] Let's be off.

FIGARO. Why?

COUNT. Come on wretch! You'll ruin me.

[*They hide behind shrubs. The shutters open, and BARTOLO and ROSINA appear at the window.*]

ROSINA. [*Fanning herself with a folded piece of paper*] What a pleasure to breathe some fresh air for a change!

BARTOLO. What is that paper you are holding?

ROSINA. This? Oh, some verses from *The Useless Precaution* which my voice teacher gave me.

BARTOLO. What is *The Useless Precaution*?

ROSINA. It is a new comedy.

BARTOLO. Bah! Another play! The critics and censors will take care of it for us, I hope. A barbarous century!

ROSINA. You are always maligning our poor century.

BARTOLO. Pardon the liberty! What has the eighteenth century done to be so praised? Stupidities of every kind: freedom of thought, the law of gravitation, religious toleration, the Encyclopedia, and this absurd drama...

ROSINA. [*Throwing her paper into the street*] Oh, I dropped my song. Hurry, hurry, sir! My song will be lost!

BARTOLO. The devil! [*He leaves the window*]

ROSINA. Sst. Sst. [*The COUNT shows himself*] Pick it up quickly and then hide. [*The COUNT picks up the paper and returns to his hiding place.*]

BARTOLO. [*Emerging from the house and searching for the paper*] Where is it? I don't see it.

ROSINA. Look under the bench.

BARTOLO. You sent me on a pretty errand! Has anyone passed?

ROSINA. [*She doesn't lie well*] I haven't seen anyone.

BARTOLO. [*To himself*] And I have been so simple as to hunt! Bartolo, my friend, you are a fool. [*He re-enters the house.*]

ROSINA. [*For the Count's ears*] My unhappiness is my excuse. Confined in this house by an odious man—is it a crime to try to escape from such slavery?

BARTOLO. [*Appearing at the window*] Come in, señorita. It's my fault if you've lost your song; but that misfortune will not happen again, I promise you! [*He closes the shutters with a bang.*]

[*The COUNT and FIGARO cautiously emerge from their hiding places.*]

COUNT. Let's examine that song. It's a letter!

FIGARO. And he was asking what *The Useless Precaution* was!

COUNT. [*Reading*] "Your continued attentions excite

my curiosity. As soon as my guardian goes out, sing something which will tell me the name, rank, and intentions of him who appears so devoted to the unfortunate...Rosina.”

FIGARO. [*Imitating Rosina's voice*] “Oh I dropped my song! Hurry, hurry, sir!” Oh these women! If you want to teach cleverness to the simplest girl, just lock her up.

COUNT. I searched six months for this beautiful woman. A few days ago I discovered that she is of noble parentage, an orphan, and engaged to be married to her guardian, an ugly old doctor named Bartolo.

FIGARO. She's a pretty bird, all right. But it will be difficult to get her out of the nest.

COUNT. Do you know her guardian?

FIGARO. Like my own mother.

COUNT. What sort of man is he?

FIGARO. He's a fine tall, short, mean young old man, with polka-dotted hair...forever spying, prying, crying...

COUNT. Oh shut up! You said the fear of suitors makes him bolt his doors?

FIGARO. Insanely jealous. He'd plug up the keyholes if he could.

COUNT. The devil! Is there a chance he'd let you in?

FIGARO. My friend! The doctor and I are like brothers. Why he even lets me live in a house of his—gratis.

COUNT. Free?

FIGARO. Yes. And I give him a gold piece every month—also gratis.

COUNT. You are his tenant.

FIGARO. Also his barber, his surgeon, his apothecary... in fact, no one may shave him, bleed him, or medicate him... except your humble servant.

COUNT. Ah, Figaro my good fellow, you can be my guardian angel, my friend in need!

FIGARO. We seem to have become very good friends lately.

COUNT. Happy Figaro! You are going to see my Rosina. Do you realize your good luck?

FIGARO. Only a person in love would say that....

COUNT. The door is opening!

FIGARO. It's our man! [*They hide.*]

BARTOLO. [*As he leaves, talking to someone in the house*] I'll be back in a few minutes. Don't let anyone inside. [*To himself*] Hmmf! The moment she asked me to come down I should have suspected something. And Basilio hasn't come yet! That moronic music master! He was to arrange everything so that my marriage could take place secretly tomorrow...and now I have to go and see what is delaying him! [*Exit. FIGARO and COUNT rise.*]

COUNT. What did I hear? He marries Rosina tomorrow in secret!

FIGARO. My lord—no obstacles, no fun!

COUNT. Who is this Basilio?

FIGARO. A rascal, a poverty-stricken music teacher ready to sell his soul for the smell of gold. [*Looking at the shutters*] There she is!

COUNT. Where?

FIGARO. Behind the shutters. Don't look!

COUNT. Why not?

FIGARO. Didn't she write: "Sing something"?

COUNT. What shall I sing? I don't know how to make verses.

FIGARO. Anything will do. A loving heart is never a severe critic.

COUNT. [*Sings (See Production Script for music to songs)*]

I am Lindoro, of lowly birth,
Dear, but you will soon discover
That I am the noblest lover
Anywhere on earth.

FIGARO. Hell! I couldn't do better myself. And I'm a writer!

COUNT. Figaro! Do you think she heard me?

ROSINA. [*Inside, sings*] My heart adores Lindor
And bids me love him evermore!

FIGARO. I think she heard you!