

FIGARO

BY CHARLES MOREY

FREELY ADAPTED FROM *LE MARIAGE
DE FIGARO* BY BEAUMARCHAIS



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

FIGARO
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SPECIAL NOTE

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FIGARO
by Charles Morey
freely adapted from *Le Mariage de Figaro* by Beaumarchais

The following acknowledgment must appear on the title page in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play:

FIGARO was originally commissioned by and received its world premiere at
THE PEARL THEATRE COMPANY, New York
(J.R. Sullivan, Artistic Director; David Roberts, Managing Director)

For Mary Harden

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Figaro is very freely adapted from *Le Mariage de Figaro* and those who know the original will recognize numerous deletions, condensations, elaborations and diversions, not to mention occasional whole cloth additions to Beaumarchais' text. I have seriously reduced the cast size, eliminating Beaumarchais' ensemble of singers and dancers; as well as cut, combined, doubled and tripled characters in order to make it economically viable for a contemporary theatre company. I have tried, however, to remain faithful to the joyously anarchic and slyly subversive spirit of the original while making it as funny, accessible and politically relevant to twenty-first-century audiences as it was to those of Beaumarchais' even more turbulent times.

Potential producers will instantly note that the text calls for four different locations. But this is not a realistic play and I would suggest that it is unnecessary to create four fully-realized sets. The play will be far better served by a minimalist approach. It is probably a good idea to have real doors and the minimal furniture required does need to be able to shift quickly and easily, but the simpler the unit set, the better. Jo Winiarski's inventive and colorful design for Hal Brooks' original Pearl Theatre Company production Off-Broadway utilized permanent doors in a false proscenium and walls (containing a third door and windows) that could fold into several different configurations. The two internal scene changes were handled swiftly and effectively by the actors. The original production was beautifully costumed by Barbara A. Bell in full late-18th century costumes and wigs — but the text plays pretty fast and loose with the notion of period accuracy, so I can imagine a successful production that only suggests the period; is set in another period entirely; or perhaps mixes periods artfully. I do suggest that in the final scene the Countess should wear a dress identical to that which Suzanne has worn throughout the earlier part of the play and vice versa.

I recommend that no attempt should be made to perform the play with French accents. French proper names, words and phrases should be pronounced accurately. The Count and Countess' speech should be elevated somewhat to suggest class, which will have the added advantage of giving Suzanne something to imitate. (Though

it is really quite amazing how readily the audience accepts the convention of the Countess and Suzanne being mistaken for one and other, even when eyes and ears should clearly tell anyone with a pulse otherwise.) Bridoison has been written with a stutter on the letter “P.” It is important that he hit those “P’s” very lightly and quickly, not dwell upon the stutter, nor turn it into a stammer. There are a number of “asides” suggested. Figaro directly addresses and engages the audiences throughout the play; Suzanne does so to a far lesser degree; the others should keep any suggested “asides” more in the nature of spoken internal thought, not acknowledging the presence of the audience. This material should play with great energy, drive and precision. In the original Pearl Theatre Company production, the show played in about 2:10, including a fifteen-minute intermission.

—Charles Morey

FIGARO received its world premiere at The Pearl Theatre Company (J.R. Sullivan, Artistic Director; David Roberts, Managing Director) in New York City, opening on October 19, 2012. It was directed by Hal Brooks; the set design was by Jo Winiarski; the costume design was by Barbara A. Bell; the lighting design was by Stephen Petrelli; the sound design was by Jane Shaw; the dramaturg was Kate Farrington; the stage manager was Dale Smallwood; the fight director was Rod Kinter; and the production manager was Gary Levinson. The cast was as follows:

FIGARO Sean McNall
SUZANNE Jolly Abraham
DOCTOR BARTHOLO Dan Daily
MARCELINE Robin Leslie Brown
CHÉRUBIN / DOUBLEMAIN Ben Charles
COUNT ALMAVIVA Chris Mixon
BAZILE / ANTONIO / BRIDOISON Brad Heberlee
COUNTESS ALMAVIVA Joey Parsons
FANCHETTE Tiffany Villarin

CHARACTERS

FIGARO: Thirties. Comic lead. The “trickster.” Very smart, very quick. A great heart and joy in life but a deep anger underneath.

SUZANNE: Late twenties. Beautiful, smart, every bit a match for her fiancé, Figaro.

COUNT ALMAVIVA: Forties. Imposing and forceful. Aristocratic. A lecher with a comedic twist. Ultimately not unlikeable.

COUNTESS ALMAVIVA (ROSINE): Thirties, forties. Beautiful, aristocratic, but deeply saddened by her husband’s neglect. Smart and resourceful when she needs to be.

DOCTOR BARTHOLO: Fifties. Smart, arrogant and somewhat aloof.

MARCELINE: Fifties. Faded. Somewhat slatternly. Strong willed. Will do almost anything to get what she wants.

FANCHETTE: Teens, early twenties. Beautiful and sexy. About as smart as a rock. Utterly without guile.

CHÉRUBIN / DOUBLEMAIN: Early twenties. Cherubin: not much more than a boy. Considers himself a great lover. Doublemain: officious court clerk.

BAZILE / ANTONIO / BRIDOISON: Forties, fifties. Bazile: Officious, vain, self-absorbed, the private secretary to the Count, maybe a little prissy. Antonio: the Count’s gardener, a comic drunk. Bridoisson: slightly dim Justice with a significant speech impediment.

PLACE

Multiple locations in the chateau of Count Almaviva.

TIME

A single day in the 1780s — or perhaps any time when a very few had all the money and power and the rest had nothing but their wits.

FIGARO

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A partly-furnished room in an elegant chateau. A door left, a door right. Perhaps a window upstage. The only furniture: a large skirted sofa, a table and a single chair. Figaro is measuring the room. Suzanne is seated at the table, putting the finishing touches on a hat.

FIGARO. Nineteen feet by ... twenty-six.

SUZANNE. Do you like my hat?

FIGARO. Love it. A pretty hat on a beautiful girl is a joy. But even on your fiancée the day before your wedding, a hat is still just a ...

SUZANNE. ... compliment if you're smart. *(He leans in to kiss her. She stops him.)* Eh! Not today. What are you measuring?

FIGARO. I am measuring, my darling, to see if that beautiful big bed the Count gave us will fit right here.

SUZANNE. In *this* room?

FIGARO. Yes. In this room. He's given us this room as a wedding present.

SUZANNE. This room!?

FIGARO. Yes.

SUZANNE. I don't want it.

FIGARO. What?

SUZANNE. I don't want it.

FIGARO. Why?

SUZANNE. I don't like it.

FIGARO. Because why?

SUZANNE. Because I don't want to say.

FIGARO. Because you don't want to say what? Why?

SUZANNE. To prove to you I'm right, I might have to admit to you I'm wrong, because there's something I haven't told you, and if you loved me you'd never want me to be wrong, so you shouldn't ask.

FIGARO. If I were a woman I'd have followed that.

SUZANNE. If you were a woman you wouldn't need to.

FIGARO. This is the most comfortable and convenient room for us in the chateau ...

SUZANNE. No.

FIGARO. ... So, if the Countess rings for you in the middle of the night — two steps, bing! You're on it. If the Count rings from his room — three steps, bang! I'm on it.

SUZANNE. And when the Count sends you off on a looong errand; bing, bang, boom, he's on me.

FIGARO. Are you saying what I think you're saying!?

SUZANNE. I am saying your generous Count Almaviva has grown bored with all the little tarts in the neighborhood, so he's turned his attention back home, but not to his wife — to yours.

FIGARO. Mine? You?

SUZANNE. Why do you think the Count made you his Steward, promised me a dowry and presented you with this room and that bed? Because he likes your beautiful blue eyes?

FIGARO. I thought it was because he appreciated my services ...

SUZANNE. He wants to appreciate mine.

FIGARO. Why haven't you told me this before?

SUZANNE. He never tried to give us a bed before. But don't worry about it, I know how to handle him.

FIGARO. Why didn't I see this?

SUZANNE. Men are stupid.

FIGARO. So women say.

SUZANNE. And why do we say it?

FIGARO. You tell me.

SUZANNE. Because men are too stupid to know when they're being stupid. So just leave this to me and (everything will be fine) ...

FIGARO. ... If there were some way to trap the old weasel, expose him and pocket some of his money along the way. I need a little scheme. This could be fun.

SUZANNE. "Money and schemes." I've heard that before, and I know where it ends. You'll make things worse than they are. He's

got to sign the marriage contract today, or ...

FIGARO. He'll sign it!

SUZANNE. Well ... alright. Just be careful.

FIGARO. I'm always careful. Any fool could trap him, take his money, get caught and be strung up by his thumbs. But to trap him, take his money and have him thank me for it in the end, that will take a truly Figaro-ian scheme.

SUZANNE. Oh, Figaro-ian? (*A bell rings offstage.*) Madame's awake. She wanted to speak to me first thing this morning.

FIGARO. Why?

SUZANNE. Somebody told her it's good luck for a neglected wife to speak with a bride on the day before her wedding. Goodbye *mon petit* Fi-Fi-Figaro. Think about your scheme, but be careful, he's a Count; you're his steward. He has money; you're poor.

FIGARO. I have brains; he has ...

SUZANNE. ... power. Remember that.

FIGARO. Give me a kiss before you go. Raise my spirits.

SUZANNE. Hah! Not today.

FIGARO. Why not?

SUZANNE. What would my husband say tomorrow?

FIGARO. You have no idea how much I love you.

SUZANNE. And when will you stop talking about it from morning to night?

FIGARO. When I prove it to you from night to morning.

SUZANNE. (*Blowing him a kiss.*) Mwah! Nothing more for you.

FIGARO. (*Calling after her.*) "Nothing more?" You gave me nothing! There can't be "more" when there's nothing to begin with! Nothing plus nothing more equals ... (?) nothing! God, I love that woman. Beautiful, always smiling and much too smart. So, that's why he made me his steward! Why didn't I see this? Suzanne is right, men are stupid. I'm stupid. The only reason the Count would raise *me* up is to put *himself* on top of my wife. Every time: a hard climb almost to the top of the hill, then the shove that sends me rolling back down. And after everything I did for him! Back in Seville when I was a barber? I worked that pretty little scheme to steal Rosine out from under the nose of her idiot guardian, Dr. Bartholo, so the Count could marry her? You remember? No? Well, I'll tell you, it was pretty clever. You see ... Ahhh, it would take an Italian opera to describe it. (*Mocking.*) Oh, but fair is fair, I suppose. I helped him win his wife, so now he helps himself to mine. Arrogant, entitled, son of a ... rich man! The fool has

convinced himself he earned his money by the great effort of sliding out of the womb onto a cloth stitched with gold. They're all the same. Give a man money and a title: If he sees it, he wants it, if he wants it, he buys it, and if he can't buy it, he takes it! And if for some reason he can't take it, he demands the king give it to him anyway, which the king does. Why? Because the rich man owns the king's debt! Well, M. Le Comte, we'll see ... (*Dr. Bartholo and Marceline enter.*) *Et voila!* Dr. Bartholo? *Quel* surprise! I was speaking of you just a moment ago.

BARTHOLO. To whom?

FIGARO. To them.

BARTHOLO. Where?

FIGARO. There.

BARTHOLO. What?

FIGARO. Why are you here? Did you come for my wedding? Did you bring us a gift?

BARTHOLO. Hardly.

FIGARO. You're much too generous.

BARTHOLO. And not that stupid.

FIGARO. Don't sell yourself short. Marceline, have you come to whine at me some more? Just because I don't love you doesn't mean you have to hate me. (*Starting to exit.*)

BARTHOLO. What's that about?

FIGARO. She'll tell you. (*He exits.*)

BARTHOLO. What's he up to this time?

MARCELINE. Why do you two hate each other so much?

BARTHOLO. He swindled me out of a hundred crowns — and my ward, Rosine. I hate him because he swindled me and he loathes me because I was so easily swindled. But madame, why have I been called? Is the Count sick?

MARCELINE. No, the Countess.

BARTHOLO. Of what?

MARCELINE. Of the Count.

BARTHOLO. Very funny.

MARCELINE. He neglects her and she falls into a swoon.

BARTHOLO. That's a surprise?

MARCELINE. How can he be jealous of her one minute and deceive her the next?

BARTHOLO. He deceives her because he's bored, and he's jealous because he's vain, and he's vain because he's able to deceive her.

MARCELINE. But he's terrified of her.

BARTHOLO. He's terrified of losing her.

MARCELINE. Why? She's devoted to him.

BARTHOLO. Because he's vain, and he's vain because ...

MARCELINE. ... he's able to deceive her, and he deceives her because he's bored.

BARTHOLO. That's right.

MARCELINE. And they say women are complicated ... Did you know the Count's marrying Figaro to Suzanne and he's giving them a wonderful present.

BARTHOLO. What?

MARCELINE. He's giving himself to Suzanne.

BARTHOLO. Who told you that?

MARCELINE. Bazile.

BARTHOLO. Bazile? Here? Now? In this chateau?

MARCELINE. Here. Now. In this chateau. And chasing me still.

BARTHOLO. I've told you twenty times to let him catch you.

MARCELINE. That's cruel, coming from you. It's you who should marry me. Have you forgotten our time together? Our little baby Emmanuel who would strew our path to the altar with flowers ...

BARTHOLO. Oh stop it! Is that why you called me here?

MARCELINE. If you won't marry me, maybe you'll help me to marry someone else.

BARTHOLO. Who?

MARCELINE. Figaro.

BARTHOLO. You wouldn't. He wouldn't. What about Suzanne?

MARCELINE. I can get her out of the way. I have a plan. You can help.

BARTHOLO. The day before the wedding? You're more devious than the Count.

MARCELINE. Let me tell you something about women ...

BARTHOLO. I'm not sure I want to know. I'm only a poor doctor.

MARCELINE. Every woman has a little voice that tells her: "Be beautiful if you can, be smart if you must — but always be suspicious." And I am very suspicious of Suzanne.

BARTHOLO. Why?

MARCELINE. Because she has refused the Count and I can't figure out why. And with a little push the Count might be jealous enough to stop her marriage to Figaro and maybe order Figaro's marriage to me to get him out of the way.

BARTHOLO. How will you give him that little push?

FIGARO

by Charles Morey

freely adapted from *Le Mariage de Figaro* by Beaumarchais

5M, 4W (doubling)

He's getting married in the morning, and the enterprising Figaro (servant, barber, professional troublemaker) couldn't be happier. But with everybody scheming to come between him and his bride, Figaro will need all his cunning to make it down the aisle. This new adaptation of Beaumarchais' comic masterpiece is not only hilariously funny, but has a razor sharp political edge.

"Mr. Morey strike[s] a deft balance between the popular theater in the age of this work's setting and a more modern sensibility, flavoring the witty dialogue with just the right infusion of contemporary idioms and mannerisms... Beaumarchais's mischievous skewering of the aristocracy caused Louis XVI to ban performances until 1784, six years after the play was written. Mr. Morey's mockery of ruling-class entitlement rekindles that irreverence while also getting in some amusing swipes about the battle of the sexes ... tart and funny ... the farce takes aim at ruling-class entitlement just as surely today as it did in pre-Revolution France."

—The New York Times

"Figaro was a character who spoke truth to power, with sharp humor as his best weapon. Thanks to playwright Charles Morey, we're seeing his 'Figaro-ian schemes' in a fresh light, in [his] witty, irreverent send-up, titled simply, FIGARO ... Morey has peppered traditional dialogue with interjections of modern humor ... gleeful fun."

—Associated Press

"Charles Morey's saucy and sassy script is not a literal translation and cheerfully acknowledges the more famous opera as well as the fact that we are watching a play. The title scamp often turns to the audience and includes us in his mischievous plans. In addition, there are numerous indirect references to our current political situation, with Figaro snidely railing against the one-percent elite of 18th-century France in the person of his master, the vain and pompous Count Almaviva."

—BackStage.com

Also by Charles Morey
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