

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO OPERA SYNOPSIS

(W.A. Mozart, composer; Lorenzo Da Ponte, librettist)

ACT I

The Opera takes place at Count Almaviva's country estate near Seville in the late 1700s. Today is the day when Figaro and Susanna, the valet and maid of the Count and Countess Almaviva, are to marry. Susanna tells Figaro that the philandering Count has been trying to seduce her. Figaro vows to outwit the Count and teach him a lesson. Dr. Bartolo enters along with his former servant, Marcellina, who is determined to collect on an old loan made to Figaro. Figaro must either pay her back or marry her in order to repay his debt. After Marcellina and Susanna trade insults, the young page, Cherubino, arrives reveling in his infatuation with women. He wants Susanna to plead on his behalf to the Countess so that he may be once again in the Count's good graces -the count has banished him after finding him with Barbarina, the gardener Antonio's daughter. Cherubino quickly hides when they hear the Count approaching. The Count tries his best to arrange a rendezvous with Susanna, but also hides when Don Basilio, the music teacher, arrives.

Susanna and Basilio begin to gossip about Cherubino's crush on the Countess. The Count, listening to the gossip, comes out of hiding in a jealous rage and begins to rant about finding Cherubino in a compromising situation with Barbarina. He becomes even more infuriated discovering Cherubino hiding in the room. Figaro returns with fellow servants who are praising the progressive reform of the count to abolish the "droit du seigneur" - the right of a noble to take his manservant's place on his wedding night. But will the Count keep his word? Figaro tries to force the Count to unite him and Susanna on the spot, but the Count avoids the trap and instead enlists Cherubino in his personal regiment in the army.

ACT II

In her boudoir, the Countess explains to Susanna how deeply her husband's philandering saddens her. Figaro enters and divulges his schemes, explaining that he has sent the Count an anonymous letter telling him that the Countess is expecting a lover while he is out hunting. They decide to send Cherubino, dressed as Susanna, to a rendezvous with the count. Susanna and the Countess begin to disguise Cherubino, and while Susanna is away to fetch a ribbon, the Count arrives, furious after reading the note and finding the bedroom door locked. Startled, the Countess hides Cherubino in the closet and lets the Count in. The Count hears a noise from the closet but the Countess refuses to unlock the door saying that Susanna is inside. The Count does not believe the Countess and he takes her to fetch a tool for opening the closet.

Susanna, having entered unnoticed, has heard the whole scene. She hurriedly helps Cherubino escape out the window and hides in the closet herself to the surprise of both the Count and the Countess when they return. All seems taken care of until the gardener, Antonio, bursts in with crushed geraniums from the flower bed below the window. Figaro is quick to take the blame for the crushed geraniums, faking a sprained ankle and claiming that it was he who jumped from the window. Marcellina bursts in with Basilio and Bartolo, waving a court summons for Figaro. This delights the Count as it gives him an excuse for delaying the wedding.

ACT III

In the audience room where the wedding is to take place, the Countess decides to alter Figaro's plan. Susanna will ask the Count to meet with her in the garden, but the Countess instead of Cherubino will go in her place. The Count at first agrees, but he becomes suspicious again when he hears Susanna conspiring with Figaro. Don Curzio, whom the count has chosen to hear the case, judges that Figaro must either marry Marcellina or pay of the debt to her. Figaro explains that since he is the son of an aristocrat, he cannot marry without his parents' consent. Since he was a foundling and has never met his parents, he doesn't think he will be able to find them. Marcellina, hearing Figaro's story, realizes that he is her son and his father is Dr. Bartolo. Susanna re-enters with money that the Countess has given her in order to pay off Figaro's debt. She is enraged to see Figaro embracing Marcellina, but she calms down when she learns that Marcellina is no longer a threat and will marry Dr. Bartolo.

The Countess begins to look back at her love for the Count when they first met, and she wants to brave danger to win him back. She dictates a note for Susanna to give to the Count. While the double wedding of Figaro to Susanna and Bartolo to Marcellina is taking place, Susanna slips the note to the Count. The Count seals the note with a pin as an acknowledgment that he will meet Susanna, and gives it to Barbarina, who misplaces the pin.

ACT IV

In the moonlit garden, Barbarina still cannot find the lost hatpin. She tells Figaro and Marcellina about the rendezvous between the Count and Susanna. Figaro, believing that Susanna plans to betray him, hides in the garden to plan his revenge. Susanna and the Countess arrive and switch cloaks to disguise themselves as each other. Left alone, Susanna rhapsodizes on her love for Figaro, but he, overhearing her, thinks she is talking about the Count. Susanna hides just in time to see Cherubino attempting to woo the Countess, disguised in Susanna's dress, until the Count chases him off and sends his wife, who he believes to be Susanna, off to an arbor where he follows her to. Figaro has caught on to the joke by now and, joining in, makes exaggerated love to Susanna in her Countess disguise. The Count is infuriated at first and plans to expose the Countess, who is actually Susanna, but the true Countess soon appears and explains the ruse. The Count is the one who must ask for forgiveness in the end, and everyone is reunited.

Maya Rose Tweten (2013)