

Seattle Opera's 'Barber of Seville' is fun and fizzy

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Duke Kim as Count Almaviva and Megan Moore as Rosina in Seattle Opera's 2024 production of "The Barber of Seville." (Sunny Martini)

By [Gemma Alexander](#)

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Opera review

Even if you think you don't like opera, you've probably hummed tunes from "The Barber of Seville." The music has appeared in everything from [Looney Tunes cartoons](#) to episodes of "Seinfeld" and "The Simpsons" and [dog food commercials](#). But there's nothing like seeing the real thing.

Through May 19, Seattle Opera's [action-packed production](#) of Rossini's "The Barber of Seville" returns to McCaw Hall in Italian with English subtitles. [Last seen in Seattle in 2017](#), this show is as colorful and busy as its titular character, the barber-about-town, Figaro.

In "The Barber of Seville," Figaro steps in (for a fee, of course) to help the young lovers Almaviva and Rosina outwit the girl's guardian, Dr. Bartolo, who wants to marry Rosina himself.

Along the way there are a lot of schemes, disguises and slapstick in a controlled chaos that somehow never detracts from the music. It helps that the music contains some of the biggest earworms the world has ever known.

In high rotation on opera stages since its premiere in 1816 and among the first shows performed by Seattle Opera, "The Barber of Seville" closes out the company's 60th season. (A [celebratory concert](#) on May 11 will sample the company's repertory.) It is also the final production under the leadership of General Director Christina Scheppelmann, who will be moving on [to lead Belgium's National Opera](#). In her five years at the head of Seattle Opera, Scheppelmann pulled the company through a global pandemic with a [full season of digital productions](#), expanded community partnerships and educational offerings, produced the world premiere of "A Thousand Splendid Suns" and debuted more than 100 artists to the Seattle Opera stage.

Once again directed by Lindy Hume, this production of "The Barber of Seville" takes place on a set made almost entirely of doors and windows that are almost constantly in use. The most important changes from the 2017 run come from the casting.

In bel canto operas like “The Barber of Seville,” the plot is secondary to the singing, with a lot of improvisation and ornamentation making every performance unique. Assisted by the infectious melodies, [conductor Valentina Peleggi](#) keeps the singers’ voices front and center, even when the audience’s laughter threatens to drown them out.

There are a lot of new voices in this run — six mainstage debuts on opening night, and three more in the alternate cast. Megan Moore as Rosina delivers teenage sass with her vocal fireworks. Dr. Bartolo is often played as a doddering old man, but Kevin Burdette (“Marriage of Figaro” in ‘22) makes him differently ridiculous with midlife-crisis energy. While belting out legendary arias, Sean Michael Plumb’s Figaro is clearly a legend in his own mind, and Count Almaviva spends most of the show in a series of silly disguises. Sung by Duke Kim (most recently Alfredo in last season’s “La Traviata”), it’s hard to decide what’s more impressive — his delivery, or the fact that he delivers while sliding across the stage on his knees. The entire cast has remarkable physicality, crawling on the ground and racing across the stage without ever missing a beat.

The combination of slapstick comedy and captivating music makes “The Barber of Seville” a great choice for first-time viewers — even young ones. There are a few suggestive moments (Seattle Opera [rates it PG](#)), but kids are more likely to be impressed by the maraca-wielding chorus and the servant (played silently by Marc Kenison aka Waxie Moon) hanging upside down from the chandelier. Family day, with \$20 youth tickets, is May 12.

If you’ve never seen live opera, this is the one to try out. And if you are already an opera fan — well, you probably already have tickets.

“The Barber of Seville”

Through May 19; Seattle Opera at McCaw Hall, 321 Mercer St., Seattle; accessibility info: st.news/seattleopera-accessibility; \$35-\$399; 2 hours 50 minutes with one intermission; 206-389-7676, seattleopera.org

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