

# The Marriage of Figaro in Concert

University of Western Ontario Singers Directed by Theodore Baerg



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Sunday March 20, 2011

## The Marriage of Figaro in Concert

by Brian Hay

The artists who performed the concert version of Mozart's 'Marriage of Figaro' last night were brilliant.

Rachel Weisdorf portrayed the flirtatious but savvy nature of 'Susanna' perfectly. She also displayed an astonishing amount of stamina. She spent a lot of time singing without showing any strain or loss of power. Conlan Gassi gave his 'Figaro' a knowing gleam in his eye that reflected the mischief in the character's nature. His timing, especially during the opening sequence was excellent. Courtney Murias sounded as if she would melt in the inferno created by the thrust of 'Cherubino's' newly discovered sexual awareness. Christopher Dunham portrayed the Count's frustration, moments of (un)righteous indignation and his deeply ingrained humanity clearly and beautifully. Lida Szkwarek carried the compassion and despair of the Countess Almaviva as if it was a living thing.

Stephanie Tritchew sang the part of 'Marcellina' beautifully. Dylan Wright displayed exceptional vocal agility when he sang 'Bartolo's' big aria. Neither of those parts are big but both demand a wide range of emotion from the singers. They both delivered. William Ford did a great job of portraying wry nature of Basilio's character. Bruce Radmacher was a hilarious 'Antonio'. As 'Don Curzio', Zachary Rondinelli interacted with the ensemble nicely during the famous sextet from the third act. Katy Clark delivered a hauntingly beautiful rendition of the aria by 'Barbarina' that opens the fourth act. The score was played on solo piano by Timothy Cheung and he made it sing. His playing captured all the joy, mischief, harmony, irony, despair ... every facet inherent in the full score and made it into a piece with a life of its own.

Theodore Baerg's narration scaled the work down and clarified the action without sacrifice to the story. The performers all made sure that what they were doing depicted both the nature of their roles and the character's intent at that moment. They captured the expressive qualities of music beautifully. During the opening duet Conlan Gassi and Rachel Weisdorf sounded as if they rapturously happy. Cherubino sounded as if he (she) was yearning for the Countess. The Count sounded furious when he thought his wife was cheating on him. Susanna and the Countess seemed like two friends sharing a bond when they sang the lovely 'Canzonetta sull'aria'. No translation was needed to grasp the context of Susanna's famous garden aria. It was easy to feel the joy between Figaro and Susanna when they reconciled. The wave that descended when the Countess forgave the Count landed like a soft blanket used to cradle infants. It was all there as plain as day. No translation was needed to understand any of this. It's all there in the music and this group brought it to exhilarating and beautiful life.

What they did went beyond just performing the music from the opera. They acted while they sang. They used some well choreographed stage movement to create a semblance of action. Some subtle lighting was used to lead the eye to the action. But, what really made it work was the enthusiasm they brought to the music. They lived every note they sang. They weren't always note perfect but their hearts were always in it. That's more important than absolute perfection. The few flaws they had are all things that time and experience will cure and the

Rachel Weisdorf (Susanna) and Matthew Pauls (Figaro)  
Photo by Claus Andersen  
From the UWO Production of  
Le Nozze di Figaro

[Theodore Baerg](#)  
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magnitude of what they accomplished transcends those points. The life they breathed into this concert transformed it into what seemed like a fully formed minimalist staging. It was indescribably fulfilling.

This group moved way beyond being students. They're artists, and they're very good ones.

This performance took place at the Imperial Theatre in Sarnia Ontario on Saturday March 19, 2011. This review was written to convey an impression of what it was like to be there.

**This line serves as a spacer.**

