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Barber of Seville: Production, Staging, and Costuming Reception Through the Years

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Annotated Bibliography:

The Barber of Seville. Directed for video by Dave Heather. Glyndebourne Productions Ltd.,
Conducted by Sylvain Cambreling. Sung by the Glyndebourne Chorus. Played by the
London Philharmonic Orchestra. 1982. 2 hrs., 34 min. DVD.

This version of *The Barber of Seville* will serve as one of the sources of more “traditional staging for the opera. I do not have a DVD player myself so I was not able to watch it yet but judging by the front of the DVD cover, the opera is performed more traditionally with its staging and costumes.

Bargreen, Melinda, “Seattle Opera offers an action-packed ‘Barber of Seville,’” *The Seattle Times*. October 16, 2017. <https://www.seattletimes.com>.

Having been a classical music critic of The Seattle Times for 31 years, Melinda Bargreen is also a composer, professor, and book author, other than being a critic. Melinda also received her B.A. and M.A. in English for the University of Washington and her Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature from the University of California, Irvine. She has written numerous reviews, profiles, previews and analysis of Seattle’s art scene as well as numerous other experiences related to the literature of being a critic.

Baranello, Micaela. Review of *The Crafty Art of Opera: For Those Who Make It, Love It, or Hate It* by Michael Hampe. *Notes* 74, no. 2 (2017): 267-69. <https://search-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org>.

“The difference between ‘just’ music and music for a purpose is not always clear in opera [...] Some people think they are making music, whereas in reality they’re making music for a purpose. And even critics are often unclear about it. They judge an opera on musical, aesthetic or historical criteria [...] but the critical yardstick is [...] namely the truthfulness of the music on the stage and, accordingly, its usefulness” (3). Michael Hampe had been a stage director for a production of *The Barber of Seville* with Los Angeles Opera in 2003 and left the production as more “traditional.” In his book that is reviewed above also will be a source of its own in explaining why some directors feel the way they do about what all goes into why operas are produced the way they are.

Calloway, Earl. "Lyric's 'Barber of Seville' Is Hilarious." *Chicago Defender*, February 15, 2001. <https://search-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org>.

Earl Calloway was an opera singer who had performed in operas across the country and had attended music schools in his earlier years. He wrote for the *Chicago Defender* for nearly 50 years on fine arts in the greater Chicago area. Learning the reasons why both experienced critics, such as Calloway, and inexperienced critics, such as Callie Cooper, perceive the reasons directors choose to stage *Barber* in contrasting ways shows the human condition of relating or not connecting to performances and a little bit of why can usually be inferred from the non-bias

critiques. Calloway's experience can speak to what perceptions he had as to why the production in his review and the reception of the show was successful.

Cancellieri, Giulia and Alex Turrini. 2016. "The Phantom of Modern Opera: How Economics and Politics Affect the Programming Strategies of Opera Houses." *International Journal of Arts Management* 18, no. 3: 25-36,89, <https://search-proquest-com.du.idm.oclc.org>.

"Despite the increasing number of new music compositions by living composers, opera houses are often reluctant to include modern and contemporary works in their programs" (25).

Cancellieri and Turini both hold PhDs from Bocconi University in Milan, Italy. They are more on the business side of the arts but have very insightful ideas as to why the public is reticent to include more modern operas, which is sometimes a reason certain directors choose to modernize the more frequently-performed operas. "Being part of the audience and sharing the same conservative tastes, corporate and individual donors typically dislike contemporary music and opera (Fuchs, 1969)" (27). These are some of the issues I will want to uncover with more evidence over the course of writing this paper.

Cooper, Callie. "Little Room for Creativity in Font's WTO Barber," *Schmopera*, August 11, 2019. <http://schmopera.com>.

Callie Cooper is a reviewer on the Schmopera page, and as much as she has less experience than a journalist from a formal newspaper would, she is studying music, has received a few prestigious positions and awards, such as being an alumna of the Washington National Opera Summer Institute and the National Symphony Orchestra Young Associates, and was an inaugural member of The Kennedy Center Youth Council. She has also placed in competitions such as a

Hal Leonard Vocal Competition and The Schmidt Competition for Young Singers. With all of these factors in mind, Callie most likely comprehends and appreciates what works best for performances of opera and can identify when one would not succeed with its goal as well.

Dadich, Scott. *Es Devlin: Stage Design*. (Radical Media and Tremolo Productions, 2017)

Abstract: The Art of Design. <https://www.netflix.com>.

This episode of *Abstract* was what originally gave me the idea to do this paper, although, I admittedly wanted to cover more than just *The Barber of Seville*. I do still think that what *Es* talks about in this episode can be applied to my paper. I especially admire *Es* in that she uses metaphors of emotions, the democracy of the theatre, the light and absence of it. “It’s not necessary for the audience to know every detail; it’s actually more helpful to create an object that, for everybody has meaning” (about 35 minutes in). The challenges *Es* gives to the audience to feel something unconventional or different but still relative to the feelings humans have all the time is so important to keeping theatre, opera, art, and other fine arts alive.

Garnhum, Dennis. “Dennis Garnhum Talks Modernization of Productions.” Interview by

Julianne Perkins, Date TBD

Dennis Garnhum had some negative reviews of one of his productions of *The Barber of Seville* that I wanted to dig deeper into, and I found another review (of which was not in my bibliography) that more praises what Garnhum did with placing the opera in the 40s. I have attempted to communicate with the theatre company he now is on staff for as Artistic Director, at

the Grand Theatre in London, Canada, and hope I can ask about both the pros and cons of the decisions Garnhum has made with his staging of the opera.

Hanjian, Marcia. "The Heroine Transformed: A Comparative Study of the Barber of Seville."

MA thesis, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick Rutgers, 1998, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

"The genre of comedy functions both as reflection and deflection of a nation's contemporaneous cultural events" (5). This statement made by Hanijan spreads throughout both modernized and traditional productions of any opera buffa especially. This dissertation also will help to explain a bit about the opera itself and what some of the aspects are of the opera that keep audiences enthralled.

Ponasik, Jill Anna. "Jill Anna Ponasik Talks Modernization of Operas and Why." Interview by Julianne Perkins, Date TBD

Jill Anna Ponasik has been Artistic Director of Milwaukee Opera Theatre for close to ten years. She has created the most innovative performances of both commissioned and earlier operas. Some of these of which she has invented newer ways of performing operas include: Iolanthe, in which she had the women in sun dresses and colorful wigs and men in more modern suit dress; The Mikado, in which there were boom whackers for some parts of the show, extra percussion written by a master of many innovative forms of percussion, many silly props, more dress to 2017 with pants and sneakers and such; and Candide, with all characters wearing black shirts (roles with their characters' names on the shirts), jeans, and Kmart durable tennis shoes, as well as hamper baskets full of props used throughout the show in a classroom setting. Jill Anna is a colleague and

friend of mine with such a mind that draws many who may not otherwise see opera to these shows because of the approaches she takes. She is a perfect person to speak with about the modernization of productions of Barber because of her experiences taking “traditional” operas and making them something still itself but another form of tangible for the audience to relate to and enjoy.

Seadia, Omer Ben. “Omer Ben Seadia Talks Modernization of Barber of Seville: Opera Colorado.” Interview by Julianne Perkins, Date TBD

Omer Ben Seadia was a driving force in making Opera Colorado’s gorgeous production of Barber of Seville happen as successfully as it did just a few weeks ago. Omer had few but still imprinting new ideas for an opera from before our time and I sincerely think that the interview(s) I will be having with her will prove fruitful of information regarding what she believes is important as to why “modernization” is a thing. Omer has worked on operas such as Yardbird (a newer opera), Ariadne auf Naxos, Josephine/Afterlife, Amahl and the Night Visitors, as well as other productions of both older and newer operas. She thinks about how factors within shows affect her, how they affect the audience, how they affect the performers and why and works with all of those factors to figure out how to best tell the story.

Terhune, George. “Design and Technical Direction of The Barber of Seville.” MA diss., University of Montana, Missoula, 1966. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

“The Most troublesome problem is the fact that one is forced to direct and design each production for two audiences” is one of the first ideas we see in George’s dissertation. Although this dissertation is mostly on the play of The Barber of Seville staged, it has similar ideas to what

my paper will concern, at least in terms of where the story of The Barber of Seville came from and how it can be portrayed on the stage. It will not cover costuming. As the dissertation states, its “study is concerned with the scenic design, property design, lighting design, and technical direction” (1). This source will be more on the side of helping to understand what is so important about what goes into the technical and other aspects of producing a show such as The Barber of Seville, whether more traditional or more modern.

*After explanations for the reader of the eventual paper to understand where the paper is going, a good part of this paper will be focused on reception history of productions both traditional and modernized to compare and contrast what may be most effective and pleasing to audiences, noting audiences will change from place to place, and each individual has his or her or their own opinion. With this in mind, a handful of sources will be reviews (as at least one was mentioned above if not closer to four). I will gain access somehow before the beginning of writing this paper to some videos of more modernized productions if not more photographs and reviews from those of which are more modernized.

*I also understand if I need to revise to use more graduate level speech than conversational.