

**2018 - 2019**  
**THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO**  
**LE NOZZE DI FIGARO**  
**BACKSTAGE INFO**

This is the sixth production of *The Marriage of Figaro* at San Diego Opera. The first production was in the 1973-74 season. (Subsequent productions were performed in the '85-'86; '91-'92; '97-'98; and '06-'07 seasons.)

This season's production of *The Marriage of Figaro* is a co-production between four companies and has been directed by Stephen Lawless at each venue - *Kansas City, Philadelphia, Palm Beach*, and finally *San Diego*. He also directed this production in Minneapolis, who rented the set and costumes. Additionally, Mr. Lawless has directed five other "*FIGARO's*" in the course of his career in London, Hong Kong, Toronto, Dallas and Glimmerglass!

Mr. Lawless has said that the San Diego Opera cast has great instincts and that each time he directs *The Marriage of Figaro*, he shapes it a bit more. Each cast allows him to discover something new about the piece.

**Staff/Running crew:** (50) Stagehands loaded in the set/lighting  
(23) Stagehands (carpenters, electricians, AV tech, prop men, fly men)  
(21) Wardrobe (wardrobe mistress, dressers, stitchers, launderers; plus (7)  
Costume crew in shop who do fittings/alterations/builds  
(7) Wig and make-up crew plus (1) wig master  
(4) Artistic team (conductor, director, choreographer, designers)  
(16) Music and production staff (incl. asst. designers, titles, stage mgrs., dialect coach etc.)

**Cast:** (10) principles plus 2 small parts that also sing in the chorus;  
(18) Chorus (9 women, 9 men);  
(4) Supers (men)

**Orchestra:** (49) 33 strings, 8 woodwinds, 4 Brass, 1 timpani, 1 harpsichord. Plus (1)  
librarian and (1) personnel manager

**Total Budget:** \$1,405,126 (for artists, orchestra, crews, building scenery and costumes, everything else . . .).

**Orchestra:**

The Harpsichord is used as a "continuo" instrument that accompanies recitative.

***Vocabulary lesson:*** Recit is short for "recitative" or "recitativo" is a style of dialogue delivery used in operas, in which a singer is allowed to adopt the rhythms of ordinary speech. It resembles sung ordinary speech more than a formal musical composition. Our Italian language coach – Emanuela Patroncini (a native Italian speaker) is very helpful in supporting the singers in finding the cadences and pronunciation of the Italian language. Recitativo secco (dry) is recit that is accompanied only by continuo – (recitativo accompagnato is accompanied by the orchestra).

Orchestra by numbers:

- Total Orchestra budget: \$251,963

- 29.75 hours (rehearsals and shows)
- \$8,460.26 hour
- \$25,380.80 per show

**Supertitles:**

There are 1,438 Title Slides to create the translation – Supertitle Caller and Title Operator work in the title booth in the balcony.

**Scenery:**

The scenery (and costumes) was designed by Leslie Travis. This is the first production in which we have seen Mr. Travis’ work on our stage. This production was built and painted by Lyric Opera of Kansas City (one of the co-production partners for this production).

***Making Scenery Dance:*** John David Peters\*, our Technical Director, has done all of the SDO “FIGARO’S”! For this production the entire night is a series of a-vista moves – meaning they are done in view of the audience. As a result the challenge is to reach each new position without any crew being seen. John David leads the crew and Supers through separate on stage rehearsals just to go through each move to ensure everyone knows where they and the scenery are going and to make it all appear to be as effortless as a dance.

Then there are the doors! The accurate presetting of doors and windows is a dance by itself. While the actors staging has them going in and out regularly and being mindful of the closing and opening as the action requires, the crew keeps a watchful eye on things to ensure everything happens as it should.

Often *The Marriage of Figaro* is played with two or even three intermissions; there is only one intermission in this staging. All scene shifts are a vista – meaning they are in sight of the audience and so need to be choreographed and rehearsed to run smoothly as required.

Scenery in numbers:

- 2 ton walls - the walls are made of steel and wood and weigh about 2 tons each
- 14 people – the walls are moved by 4 supers and 10 stagehands (about 7 people on each wall)
- 50 hinged pieces can be found on this set that latch, unlatch, open, close, are removed, or replaced from scene to scene.
- 200 door openings and closings as part of the action onstage
- 1 brand new performance floor – the previous floor was pretty battered following the preceding four productions. This floor is made of Arboron – which is a more durable (and more expensive) product than plywood.

**Props:**

This production is not overly ornate – each prop is very specific and generally tied to action rather than being just ornamental. The props crew is responsible for the running of the show – making sure props are preset and in place for the start of each scene as well as maintenance if things get damaged or broken. They make sure they know what kind of liquids the singers want when there is wine on stage or if there are any food allergies when there is food to be eaten.

There are often items in a production where there is discussion about which department will handle certain items. For example – the dresses in the closet in Act I while representing the Contessa’s

wardrobe, they are not costume pieces, but rather are dressing that is handled by the props department.

It is interesting to note that while this specific production has been staged at four companies already (SDO is the 5<sup>th</sup> and final co-production stop) things do change, and props (and costumes) do still get added as the director and choreographer explore the action on stage. In the second week of rehearsal, the director requested some additional props for some of the chorus at the end of Act II - a wooden pail & mop, broom, boot and brush, etc. - to give them action consistent with their characters in the household - a good example of the ongoing shaping that the director does throughout the process.

### **Lighting:**

The lighting is designed by Thomas C. Hase who has designed lighting two previous times at SDO - for *Don Giovanni* and *La Bohème* both in the 2014-15 season.

In conceiving this production of *The Marriage of Figaro* the team wanted to create a landscape of both the human as well as the social drama contained in the piece. The lighting is completely integrated into this narrative. The color pallet is very tightly contained from warm whites to cool whites attempting to mix contemporary references with the timelessness of the story. The deepest colors are used in the very last scene until the truth is known which sweeps us into the bright break of day and clarity. The walls are featured strongly at all points in the piece, which illustrate the social breakdown of the aristocracy as we go through the evening.

Thomas has been in residence to focus the lights, create the looks of the show, and set cues during the technical rehearsals. The design employs a very theatrical approach with a lot of side light keeping the wings in shadow and showing off the bas relief of the walls and tree.

Lighting by the Numbers:

- 450 lighting instruments
- 336,000 watts of power - equal to over 134,400 cell phone chargers!
- 21 moving lights
- 8 color changing LED fixtures

Most of the lights are colored using polycarbonate or polyester filters called gels. The moving lights use glass filters instead, as they are more durable, and have cyan, magenta, and yellow graded filters that can mix to create many different colors. The LED units use red, blue, and green emitters, like a television, as well as amber and white emitters to improve their color range.

Moving lights are flexible, versatile fixtures that have a movable beam. They can be programmed to reposition the beam of light throughout a production and one fixture can be used to create several different interesting looks. One moving light can take the place of multiple conventional lights in a lighting rig. They can be programmed in the light board to focus the light like a spot light or to be used as part of the scene to create different moods and textures as well as to create special effects.

Lighting levels (how bright the lights are) are controlled by computer, recorded into lighting states called cues. Once recorded, the cues are played back during performance by pressing a single "go" button. There are 122 light cues recorded in the light console, which were written for the show in Indiana, imported into our console, and checked and cleaned up during rehearsals and lighting.

***Talking Backstage:*** Usually, you want to be quiet in the wings, however, our Stage Manager has a lot to say!

Mary Yankee Peters\*, our Production Stage Manager calls all lighting and flown scenery cues (among other duties). She calls 351 lighting cues in this production. The show is 195 minutes long, so she calls a cue (on average) every 108 seconds.

Beyond that, she calls singer to the stage, and communicates with her assistants and crew heads throughout the performance to ensure the performance runs smoothly and consistently each night. She does all of this while keeping an ear out for the music her eyes on the action on stage via her monitor SR. She plays as much a role as the performers on stage – she needs to keep her full attention and energy focused from start to finish.

### **Costumes:**

The costumes seen this production were built specifically for this co-production by the Lyric Opera of Kansas City Costume shop. They have been worn by each cast. Great care is taken when making alterations and repairs to ensure they hold up not only for our production, but for any future productions as well.

Costumes in numbers:

- 98 Costume Looks
- 406 Costume Pieces
- 33 Pairs of Shoes

There are quick change booths on each side of the stage. The stagehands put together these booths based on the unique requirements of the production and the staging. The Wardrobe team and Costume shop supervisor identify locations and the stagehands make sure it happens. This is an illustration of the interdepartmental collaboration and communication required to ensure the production runs smoothly.

For each production a “Bible” is created (or provided) and is maintained. In the bible is sourcing information for fabric, shoes, trim, etc.

**Show Note:** The “Figaro” bible provides details about each character’s costume, down to whether they are wearing stockings (above the knee), tights (thick, with a waist) or pantyhose (sheer with a waist). Some performers (Mr. Hughes (Figaro), for example) have a pair of tights and a pair of stockings for different parts of the show.

That is particularly relevant in this production of Figaro, as many of the characters remove their stockings and shoes. The director chose to include this action as a reference to the era’s appreciation of the calf muscle as a “sexy” part of the body.

Occasionally a few costumes get completely re-built due to differences in the sizes of the singers from one production to the next. However, sometimes it is easier and less expensive to build a costume from scratch than to make alterations. The shop utilizes the bible to match fabric and trim to maintain the integrity of the design.

### **Wigs & Makeup:**

Steven Bryant is the wig and make up designer for this production of *The Marriage of Figaro* and has been with the company since 2005.

#### Wigs by the numbers

- 33 wigs in the show
- 3 leads in the show are wearing their own hair. (See if you can identify them.)

It's usually a director's call for performer's to use their own hair – sometimes the principals prefer and request to use their own hair. Surprisingly, it costs more to use a singer's own hair as opposed to a wig because you have to call the performer in earlier, and utilize more crew time to style a performer's hair (20-30 min) versus putting a wig on their head (5 min).

*The Marriage of Figaro* was composed in 1786 and the wigs worn in the show were made the exact same way they were made in the 1700s; through a rigorous skill called "ventilating", a process where each hair is tied into the wig with a small hook. A wig can take approximately 40 hours of hand work to build. Eyebrows, mustaches and beards vary in how long they take and can range from 3 hours to 20 hours depending on density.

**Stage Magic:** When *Cherubino* gets his haircut – the actors are actually cutting the hair of the wig – how do we do this so that we aren't destroying an expensive wig for each performance?

The wig starts out as a short men's wig that has several wefts of hair sewn into it to make it long. Once it is constructed, it is styled in a low rigged ponytail ribbon that the performers can quickly and easily let out to cut the hair. (A weft of hair is a long "curtain" of hair that has a seam at the top.) Every night these wefts of hair are sewn into Emily Fons' wig so that Figaro and the Count can actually cut the hair. At intermission the wig crew removes what remains of the added (and now cut) wefts of hair for the remainder of the performance, and the wig is ready to go again for the next performance. It takes about an hour each day to reinstate so that it can cut on stage in a matter of a few minutes.

In the case of the livery wigs (the white "powdered" wigs) worn in the show, they vary in composition and are made solely of, or are a mixture of human hair, yak hair and synthetic fibers. The livery wigs are indicative of the 16th Century and are accompanied with a queue, a small bag and bow at the base of the wig where the ponytail is usually contained. The reason from them was so they would not get powder on their coat from their ponytail.

Principal makeup and wigs are applied in the room at the end of the dressing room hallway or in individual dressing rooms by our crew of Wig and Makeup artists. The chorus and supers have their wigs and makeup applied by additional wig and makeup artists in the rehearsal hall downstairs. The Chorus men are wearing very little and probably no make-up and the chorus women are wearing very natural make up.



#### **CIVIC THEATRE BASIC TECH INFO:**

<b>Seats:</b>	2,885	<b>Number of traps:</b>	6 (4'x6' to 4'x18')
<b>Proscenium opening:</b>	56' wide and 29'6" high	<b>Height of grid:</b>	80'
<b>Depth of stage:</b>	56' (86' to back wall)	<b>Number of line sets:</b>	69'