

SYNOPSIS

Act I

A small square in Seville before dawn. Disguised as a student, Count Almaviva serenades Rosina ("Ecco, ridente in cielo"). He learns from Figaro, a former servant, now the city barber and general factotum ("Largo al factotum"), that she is Dr Bartolo's ward, and that he has access to the house. Rosina contrives to drop a note for Almaviva, sending her guardian on a wild-goose chase to pick it up and causing him to resolve to keep her under even closer guard. The letter asks for information about her unknown suitor's name, rank and intentions; and when Bartolo has set off in search of his crony Don Basilio, the music teacher, to arrange his marriage to Rosina, Almaviva sings another serenade, telling her that he is a poor student called Lindoro ("Se il mio nome saper voi bramate").

Inspired by the Count's munificence, Figaro declares that he can get him into the house, disguised as a drunken soldier seeking a billet ("All' idea di quel metallo"). Inside Dr Bartolo's house, Rosina is determined to marry her unknown suitor, while Bartolo is set on marrying her himself. He tries to interrogate his servants about what has been going on in his house, but they can only yawn or sneeze, because they have been dosed by Figaro. Basilio tells him that Count Almaviva has been seen in Seville and advises getting rid of him by slander ("La calunnia è un venticello"). They retire to work on the marriage contract. Figaro, who has overheard their plans, tells Rosina and urges her to write to his "poor cousin." The letter is already written and she gives it to him. Bartolo, suspecting that she has been writing, confronts her with the evidence. She has an answer to all his accusations, but he is not convinced and says he will lock her in her room when he goes out ("A un dottor della mia sorte"). Almaviva bursts in, disguised as a drunken soldier ("Ehi, di casa! buona gente!"). In the confusion he slips Rosina a

note, which is seen by Bartolo, but Rosina smartly substitutes the laundry list. The watch arrive to quell the riot, but are awed by a document produced by Almoviva.

Act II

Bartolo is voicing his suspicions about this soldier when Almoviva appears again, this time disguised as “Don Alonso”, a supposed pupil of Don Basilio, who, he says, is indisposed and has sent him to take Rosina’s music lesson. To allay Bartolo’s suspicions he produces Rosina’s note, pretending it has fallen into his hands by accident and suggesting that Bartolo tell her it was given to him by a mistress of the Count, to prove that he is trifling with her affections. Rosina sings an aria to the Count’s accompaniment (“Contro un cor”) and as Bartolo dozes off, the Count explains his plan for eloping with Rosina later that night. While Bartolo sings an old aria, (“Quando mi sei vicina”), Figaro appears to shave Bartolo and manages to get hold of the key to the balcony. Basilio arrives, but is told to go home because he looks so ill, advice he accepts the more readily because Almoviva slips him a bribe (“Don Basilio! – Cosa veggo”). Figaro begins to shave Bartolo, while Almoviva and Rosina continue to arrange the elopement. Bartolo realises what is going on and the Count and Figaro make their escape.

Basilio comes back with the unwelcome news that the unknown suitor is probably Almoviva himself, a conclusion he has reached because of the size of the bribe. Bartolo sends Basilio to bring the notary to perform the marriage with Rosina and to arrest Figaro and Almoviva. Berta wonders why people in love act so crazily (“Il vecchiotto cerca moglie”).

During the storm Figaro and Almoviva climb a ladder to the balcony, only to be confronted by an angry Rosina, but the Count calms her fears by revealing his identity. Figaro urges haste, but the ladder has been taken. Basilio arrives with the notary and they get him to solemnise Almoviva’s marriage to Rosina. Bartolo and the law arrive too late: Bartolo has no choice but to accept that he has been beaten and join in the celebrations (“Di sì felice innesto”).