



C. EDWARD WHEATON

Loosely adapted from the 1775 play
by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais

Norman Maine Publishing

The Barber of Seville

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*“Relax.
The scheme is almost
foolproof...”*

—Figaro

The Barber of Seville

COMEDY. Though *The Barber of Seville* is best known as a comic opera by Gioacchino Rossini (1816), the original play by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais (1775) is considered one of the greatest European comedies of the 18th century. Rodrigo is desperate to make Rosina his wife, but Rosina's father, Señor Bartholo, has arranged for Rosina to marry the very old, very wealthy, and very senile Count Almaviva in just one week. Since Rosina is opposed to marrying the Count, her father has forbid her to leave the house and has hired a professional chaperone to guard Rosina and keep away all would-be suitors. For a "small fee," the clever Figaro, who just happens to be Señor Bartholo's barber, orchestrates a rendezvous between Rodrigo and Rosina. On the day Figaro is to shave Señor Bartholo, Figaro gives Rosina's music teacher a strong laxative and then arranges for Rodrigo to masquerade as Rosina's guitar teacher. This delightful easy-to-stage one-act adaptation contains the wit and gaiety of the original story and introduces a new character, the hilarious "professional chaperone," Señora Delgato.

Performance Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

About the Story

Beaumarchais (1732-1799) worked as a clockmaker, eventually becoming the royal watchmaker and a music instructor to Louis XV's daughters. *The Barber of Seville* was a great success for Beaumarchais, as the audiences loved the play's clever rogue, Figaro.

Characters

(6 m, 4 f, 2 flexible, optional extras)
(With doubling: 5 m, 3 f, 2 flexible)

FIGERO: Señor Bartholo's barber, surgeon, and apothecary; clever rogue.

RODRIGO: In love with Rosina.

ROSINA: In love with Rodrigo but is engaged to Count Almaviva.

SEÑOR BARTHOLO: Rosina's wealthy father.

SEÑORA DELGATO: Professional chaperone hired to prevent Rosina from running away before her wedding to Count Almaviva takes place; widow who is wise to the ways of men.

COUNT ALMAVIVA: Very old, very wealthy, and very senile; engaged to Rosina; non-speaking.

SERVANT 1, 2: Earn their living by taking bribes from suitors; flexible.

DON BAZILE: Rosina's music teacher.

MARIA: Rosina's friend.

WEDDING PLANNER: Working with Señor Bartholo to plan the wedding; female.

SERENADER: One of Rosina's suitors; non-speaking.

EXTRA (Optional): As servants.

Options for Doubling:

Maria/Wedding Planner (Female)

Serenader/Don Bazile (Male)

Setting

1775, Seville, Spain.

A street outside Señor Bartholo's house: The exterior of the house has grills over the windows and there is a balcony overlooking the street. There are bushes under the balcony in which Rodrigo can hide.

Interior of Señor Bartholo's house: There are two chairs and a loveseat. A table with a vase of flowers on it is positioned between the loveseat and chair. There are entrances R and DLC.

Synopsis of Scenes

Scene 1: Early morning, a street outside Señor Bartholo's house.

Scene 2: Interior of Señor Bartholo's house.

Props

Small money purse
2 Men's handkerchiefs
Small bottle
List
Bell cord
Loveseat
Chair

Table
Wineglass
Serving tray
Wine bottle
Vase of flowers
Hand fan
2 Letters

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Early morning, a street outside Señor Bartholo's house. Rodrigo is seen standing in the bushes near the balcony. He is rubbing his arms, as it is a bit chilly.)

RODRIGO: The morning air is almost numbing. But it is worth it just for the chance of seeing her. I have followed her from Madrid to Seville. If my friends knew that I was rising early just to spend my mornings under the window of my fair Rosina, they would never let me hear the end of it. *(Sighs.)* Is this the action of a sane man?

(Rosina appears on the balcony and stretches. Rodrigo tries to get her attention, but Rosina does not notice and goes back inside. Rodrigo looks longingly after her. Figaro enters from behind.)

FIGARO: She is lovely, isn't she?

RODRIGO: *(Startled.)* Good God, man!

FIGARO: Forgive me, señor, I did not mean to startle you. But she is lovely.

RODRIGO: Yes. She is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.

FIGARO: *(Sighs.)* Too bad.

RODRIGO: What do you mean, señor?

FIGARO: Oh, forgive me. I am Figaro. *(Bows.)*

RODRIGO: I am Rodrigo.

FIGARO: Señor Rodrigo, I am afraid you are wasting your time.

RODRIGO: What do you mean?

FIGARO: *(Shaking his head.)* Ah, this is certainly one of life's cruel jests! I have just met you and must be the bearer of bad news.

RODRIGO: Bad news?

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FIGARO: The fair Rosina is engaged to Count Almaviva.

RODRIGO: Engaged to Count Almaviva?! But that is impossible! Rosina is engaged to me!

FIGARO: Does she know it?

RODRIGO: Of course.

FIGARO: Where are you from?

RODRIGO: Madrid.

FIGARO: Perhaps in Madrid they do things differently. But here in Seville, women are permitted to be engaged to only one man at a time.

RODRIGO: She cannot marry him!

FIGARO: Her father has the opposite view. That is why he keeps her locked up. She is not permitted out of the house until she is wed. Señor, we have plenty of fair young ladies here in Seville, any of which, I am sure would interest you. In fact, I know of a young lady – Carmen is her name – she works as a hostess at a local tavern. Perhaps I could arrange an introduction.

RODRIGO: Rosina is the one I have come for! I have followed her from Madrid. We met six months ago on the Pardo. And every night we met in secret. She told me of her father not wanting her to marry a penniless beggar, but that did not stop her from falling in love with me.

FIGARO: (*Sighs.*) Why is it men desire most what they cannot have? Again, señor, I must deliver more bad news. She is going to marry Count Almaviva within the week. In fact, her father meets with the wedding planner this very afternoon to finalize the details.

RODRIGO: I must find a way. I know she still loves me! I will take her by force if I have to!

FIGARO: How romantic! You should get out of prison in time to meet Rosina's grandchildren.

RODRIGO: Then it is hopeless.

FIGARO: Not entirely.

RODRIGO: What do you mean?

FIGARO: I will help you.

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RODRIGO: Why would you want to help me?

FIGARO: In the short time I have known you, I have grown quite fond of you. And besides, I am a romantic at heart. Throughout history, men have been willing to risk life, limb, and even matrimony, in the pursuit of love. You are willing to risk anything in the pursuit of love?

RODRIGO: Yes.

FIGARO: Excellent! For a small fee, I can help you recover your fair Rosina.

RODRIGO: I thought you said you were fond of me?

FIGARO: I am. Very fond.

RODRIGO: Then why should I pay you? I will merely wait until her father leaves the house, then bribe the servants with a few coins... (*Figaro shakes his head.*) And what is wrong with that?

FIGARO: Your plan has failed already.

RODRIGO: What do you mean?

FIGARO: If, as you say, all you had to do was bribe the servants, you would not need my services.

RODRIGO: Well?

FIGARO: Ah, señor, this bit of information I give to you for free. The servants have a thriving business of letting themselves be bribed and then informing on the would-be suitors who are promptly thrown out on their ears. Also something new has been added since you last saw fair Rosina.

RODRIGO: Something new?

FIGARO: A watchdog.

RODRIGO: (*Shrugs.*) That is not such an insurmountable problem. Just throw him a piece of raw meat.

FIGARO: You don't understand...

(Rosina comes out on the balcony followed by Señora Delgato.)

ROSINA: (*To Señora Delgato.*) Must you follow me wherever I go!?

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DELGATO: It is my job to watch you.

ROSINA: This is a prison and you are my jailer!

DELGATO: Soon you will be married. Then you will be rid of me.

ROSINA: What? You will not accompany me on my honeymoon?!

DELGATO: Ah, such insolence! Come along now!

(Rosina and Señora Delgato exit.)

RODRIGO: Who was that?

FIGARO: The watchdog. Her name is Señora Delgato, a professional chaperon. She is with Rosina constantly to be sure she does not run away. It is said she has eyes in the back of her head. She is a widow, and so she is wise to the ways of men. She is not swayed by compliments, or bribes, and it is also said she never sleeps. Señor Bartholo hired her on his arrival from Madrid about the same time he announced his daughter's engagement to Count Almaviva. It is a perfect arrangement. Rosina is young and the Count is very old, very rich, and very senile. I doubt the old Count even knows he is about to be married. It was all arranged between Señor Bartholo and the Count's family.

(Rosina and Señor Bartholo come out on balcony.)

ROSINA: But, Father, I do not wish to marry the old Count!

BARTHOLO: Of course not. You would much more prefer one of those penniless dandies that swarmed around you like flies when we lived in Madrid. The Count is wealthy –

ROSINA: He needs a nurse, not a wife!

BARTHOLO: When you are a wealthy widow, you can marry whomever you desire.

ROSINA: He smells like a grotto.

BARTHOLO: *(Shrugs.)* No one is perfect.

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(Rosina and Bartholo exit back inside.)

FIGARO: Well, señor?

RODRIGO: *(Sighs.)* All right. How do you propose to help me?

FIGARO: I, Figaro, am a man of many talents. A man of many resources, well versed in the art of deception. Let me show you how to make the impossible, possible.

RODRIGO: For a fee.

FIGARO: I am a poor man, señor...but rich in a lifetime of knowledge.

(Rodrigo hands Figaro a small purse of money.)

RODRIGO: This is all I have with me.

(Figaro weighs it in his hand.)

FIGARO: Just the right amount.

RODRIGO: What is your plan?

FIGARO: First, we must get you inside. If luck is with us, this should be no problem.

RODRIGO: Luck?!

FIGARO: Relax, señor. Practically nothing can go wrong.

RODRIGO: Practically nothing?!

FIGARO: Please, señor. Do you play the guitar?

RODRIGO: Yes.

FIGARO: Good! At least you are through the front door.

RODRIGO: I don't understand. How does playing the guitar get me in?

FIGARO: Permit me to explain. As it so happens, I have access to the house. I am Señor Bartholo's barber, his surgeon, and his apothecary. And it so happens that today is the day I shave him.

RODRIGO: But what has that to do with the guitar?

FIGARO: Nothing

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RODRIGO: What!?

FIGARO: Please, señor, allow me to finish. It also just so happens that today is the day when Rosina has her music lesson.

RODRIGO: Ah, I see. You propose to get me inside as Rosina's music teacher.

FIGARO: A most clever plan, which, I am sure you will agree, is alone worth the small fee.

RODRIGO: But don't you think that Señor Bartholo might be just a little suspicious of a new music teacher? What is going to prevent her regular music teacher from coming?

FIGARO: That would be Don Bazile. Fortune has certainly smiled upon you today. As it just so happens, it is also the day I shave Don Bazile.

RODRIGO: And?

FIGARO: I will figure that out later. But be assured, he will not interfere.

RODRIGO: And that leaves the watchdog.

FIGARO: I shall put vigilance to sleep and bring love awake and overcome all obstacles. Señora Delgato has a glass of wine every afternoon. It will be a simple enough matter to slip her a sleeping potion. I will arrange to have a carriage waiting to take you and your bride away. Place all your trust in Figaro. *(Stands back, looks over Rodrigo.)* Hmm. You don't look much like a music teacher. Don't get me wrong, you are fine looking...whatever you are. By the way, what do you do for a living?

RODRIGO: Well, you see, I don't work.

FIGARO: Never mind, I understand. Perhaps Carmen can obtain a position for Rosina at the Smugglers Inn. Carmen... *(Sighs.)* Back to business. Come with me back to my shop and I shall obtain a change of wardrobe for you that is more appropriate for a music teacher.

(They exit. Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Interior of Señor Bartholo's house. Enter Bartholo and the Wedding Planner, talking. Rosina follows.)

BARTHOLO: *(Looking over the list.)* Excellent! All the wedding preparations meet with my approval.

WEDDING PLANNER: *(Bows.)* Thank you, Señor Bartholo.

ROSINA: Am I not to have anything to say?

BARTHOLO: Of course, my dear.

ROSINA: What then?

BARTHOLO: "I do!"

ROSINA: *(Stamps her foot.)* Ooh!

(Angry, Rosina exits. Wedding Planner takes the list.)

WEDDING PLANNER: *(To Señor Bartholo.)* Leave everything to me.

(Exit Wedding Planner. Bartholo pulls a bell cord. Enter Servant 1, 2.)

BARTHOLO: Make sure everything is in readiness. Count Almaviva comes today to visit.

SERVANT 1, 2: *(Bow.)* Yes, Señor Bartholo.

(Exit Bartholo.)

SERVANT 1: *(Sighs.)* I am certainly going to miss Rosina.

SERVANT 2: Yes. We have never had a more profitable enterprise.

SERVANT 1: The fools that bribe us just so they can get thrown out on their ears. Ah, well!

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(Exit Servants 1, 2. Enter Rosina and Bartholo.)

ROSINA: But Father...

BARTHOLO: Please, Rosina, my lovely daughter. You are going to be married and that is final!

ROSINA: Then you leave me with no other alternative. If you insist upon this marriage, I shall throw myself off the balcony. What is your answer?

BARTHOLO: *(Sighs.)* All right, my dear. *(Rosina brightens as she thinks she has finally won.)* But at least have the courtesy not to land on some poor passerby.

ROSINA: *(Angrily.)* Oooh!

(Rosina crosses her arms across her chest and turns her back to Bartholo. Bartholo smiles as he exits. Enter Maria.)

MARIA: Rosina!

(Rosina turns.)

ROSINA: Ah, Maria! I am so glad to see you! *(They embrace.)*
Tell me, what is it like in the outside world?

MARIA: It continues on.

ROSINA: No chance of it coming to an end within a week?

MARIA: No. But I have not read today's paper.

ROSINA: *(Sighs.)* It was my last chance to avoid marrying the old Count.

MARIA: It would have been better for you if you had been born a male.

ROSINA: Just think what a sensation it would create if I were a male and marrying the Count!

(Both laugh.)

MARIA: It is good that you have not lost your sense of humor.

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ROSINA: You are so lucky. I am sure your father would not force you to marry someone you did not love.

MARIA: With seven other sisters, my father would not care if we married rag pickers as long as we did not live at home. *(Sighs.)* If there were only someone else.

ROSINA: Can you keep a secret?

MARIA: *(Perks up.)* Of course!

ROSINA: There is someone else...

MARIA: Who? Is he here in Seville? What is his name? What does he do? Tell me!

ROSINA: His name is Rodrigo. But I fear he has forgotten me. I met him when we lived in Madrid. We met secretly until Father became suspicious, then we moved here. Father would not have approved anyway, for I do not believe that he is from a wealthy family.

MARIA: *(Sighs.)* That only happens in fairy tales where the prince disguises himself as a pauper. *(Looks around.)* Where is your jailer?

ROSINA: She is with my father, planning my wedding. *(An idea of escape dawns upon her.)* Come on.

MARIA: What?

ROSINA: Shhh!

(Maria and Rosina sneak off SL. Bartholo and Señora Delgato bring Rosina back in.)

BARTHOLO: *(Calls offstage, to Maria.)* I'm sorry, but Rosina must get ready to meet her future husband. Perhaps after they are married you can visit her again. *(To Rosina.)* And where did you think you were going, my pretty daughter?

(Rosina fans herself furiously.)

ROSINA: I am suffocating!

BARTHOLO: I'll have the servants open more windows.

ROSINA: But Father...

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(Bartholo feels Rosina's forehead.)

BARTHOLO: It is nothing. Just the vapors rising in your brain.

(Señora Delgato takes Rosina's pulse.)

DELGATO: Her pulse is normal.

BARTHOLO: Figaro comes today to shave me. I will have him prescribe something for you.

ROSINA: What I need is to get out of this house.

BARTHOLO: If you try to sneak out again, I will be forced to lock you in your room.

ROSINA: Why not wall up the windows? There is not much difference between a prison and a dungeon.

BARTHOLO: Hmm. Not a bad idea!

(Enter Servant 1.)

SERVANT 1: Señor Bartholo, Count Almaviva has arrived.

BARTHOLO: Good! Come along, Rosina.

(All exit the room. Pause. Servant 2 escorts Rodrigo into the room.)

SERVANT 2: Please wait here, señor.

(Rodrigo nervously looks around the room. He begins to pace. Servants 1, 2 appear and stand in the doorway. They stare at Rodrigo and whisper to each other. Rodrigo notices this, which makes him more nervous. Finally Servants 1, 2 approach Rodrigo.)

SERVANT 1: Señor, we were just thinking...

RODRIGO: *(Thinking quickly.)* Marvelous! Allow me to shake your hands! *(Reaches out and takes each Servant's hand, shakes.)* It must make you proud to accomplish so much! Why, I am sure if your master were here, he would shake your hands

also! *(The Servants are dumbfounded by this and merely stare in bewilderment.)* Perhaps one day you will be written up in a scientific journal. But you should be very careful not to overdo it. You might strain something! Thinking should be done in small doses until you become accustomed to it. And then should only be done while sitting down. I do wish I had more time to discuss this phenomenon with you, but, as I have a music lesson to give, I don't have the time. But, as for you, my friends, my advice is...the best thing for you to do right now is to go about your tasks and practice thinking a little while longer! But remember, be careful! Good day!

(Rodrigo bows. Servants 1, 2 are completely bewildered by what has just transpired. They automatically bow and exit, still bewildered. Rodrigo wipes his forehead with a handkerchief. Pause. Figaro enters, escorted by bewildered Servants 1, 2. Servants 1, 2 stand in the doorway.)

FIGARO: *(Playing his part.)* Ah, Señor Rodrigo! I see you are here to give the music lesson. *(Servants 1, 2 warily look over Rodrigo. Rodrigo notices and bows. Servants 1, 2 bow and slowly back out of sight.)* What was that all about?

RODRIGO: Never mind that, I thought you were not coming!

FIGARO: An artist cannot be rushed.

RODRIGO: But I need an explanation for Don Bazile's absence.

FIGARO: When in doubt, use the truth.

RODRIGO: What?

FIGARO: I merely told Don Bazile that he looked run down and was in need of an elixir.

RODRIGO: And?

FIGARO: I think I may have mistakenly given him a very strong laxative instead. At least that is my story should we be found out.

RODRIGO: Found out!

FIGARO: Relax. The scheme is almost foolproof.

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RODRIGO: Almost?!

(Figaro hands a small bottle to Rodrigo.)

FIGARO: Here.

RODRIGO: What is this?

FIGARO: The sleeping potion. Just put it in Señora Delgado's wine.

RODRIGO: I thought you were going to do that?

FIGARO: I will be busy with Señor Bartholo.

RODRIGO: But how am I going to do it unnoticed?

FIGARO: I have arranged a distraction. *(Voices are heard offstage.)* Shhh!

(Enter Bartholo and Servant 1.)

BARTHOLO: Ah, Figaro! I see you are here also. *(To Servant 1.)* You may go. *(Exit Servant 1. To Rodrigo.)* My servant tells me that you are substituting for Don Bazile.

RODRIGO: That is right, Señor Bartholo.

BARTHOLO: Exactly why is Don Bazile not here?

RODRIGO: Well...

FIGARO: He suddenly became ill.

BARTHOLO: You were there, then, Figaro?

FIGARO: That is right. It was his day to be shaven also.

BARTHOLO: *(Looks Rodrigo over suspiciously.)* Hmm. Don Bazile has never mentioned to me that he had an assistant. Are you certain he sent you?

RODRIGO: How else would I know to come here? Why would I come to your house with guitar and music to instruct your daughter...Rosina. I believe that was the name Don Bazile told me.

BARTHOLO: That is her name, but—

FIGARO: I am sure that this young man is competent to teach your daughter. Don Bazile would not have entrusted the task to Señor Rodrigo.

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BARTHOLO: You know him then?

FIGARO: (*Hedging.*) Well...

BARTHOLO: Fine. As long as you vouch for him.

(*Enter Rosina, Señora Delgato, and Count Almaviva. Rosina suppresses a look of happy surprise. Rodrigo approaches Señora Delgato.*)

RODRIGO: (*To Bartholo, indicating Señora Delgato.*) Ah, this must be your lovely daughter.

(*Rodrigo kisses Señora Delgato's hand.*)

BARTHOLO: No. This is Señora Delgato, my daughter's chaperon. (*Indicates Rosina.*) This is my daughter Rosina.

RODRIGO: Forgive me. But, after all, it was a natural mistake. The two could pass for sisters. (*Bows to Rosina.*)

DELGATO: Humph!

RODRIGO: Count Almaviva! (*The Count just smiles throughout. He takes the Count's hand and shakes it.*) I am glad to see you again! You are looking extremely well!

BARTHOLO: You know Count Almaviva?

RODRIGO: Of course. The Count and I are old friends, are we not, Count? (*Count just smiles.*) I give him guitar lessons.

BARTHOLO: The Count?

RODRIGO: Why so surprised? The Count has many hidden talents.

BARTHOLO: The Count?

RODRIGO: Oh, yes. He is also a brilliant conversationalist. Why, when the mood strikes him, I cannot get a word in edgewise.

BARTHOLO: The Count? (*Señora Delgato waves a closed fan in front of Count's face. Getting no response, she merely shakes her head. To Rosina.*) Señor Rodrigo will be giving you your music lesson today. Don Bazile seems to be indisposed.

ROSINA: (*Coy.*) Of course, I am somewhat disappointed.

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BARTHOLO: If you wish to postpone your lessons...

ROSINA: No, no, no. After all, Don Bazile would not have sent Señor...what was your name again?

RODRIGO: Rodrigo. *(Bows.)*

ROSINA: Yes, Señor Rodrigo, if he did not have his fullest confidence in him.

BARTHOLO: Well, my dear, as long as you are satisfied. *(Kisses her forehead.)*

FIGARO: Señor Bartholo, we must begin. *(Indicates shave.)*

BARTHOLO: *(Rubbing the whiskers on his chin.)* You are right. I believe it has grown a bit more as we were standing here.

(Exit Figaro and Bartholo. The Count is seated on the loveseat. Señora Delgato sits in a chair.)

RODRIGO: And, Señorita Rosina, we must begin.

(Rodrigo moves to escort Rosina to a chair and puts his hand on her lower back.)

DELGATO: Señor Rodrigo! Rosina is capable of finding the chair herself. She is not a cripple!

RODRIGO: Of course. *(Bows. Rosina is seated with a guitar on her lap.)* And now if you will allow me. *(He takes her hand. Señora Delgato clears her throat and glowers at Rodrigo. To Señora Delgato.)* I am merely going to show her fingering.

DELGATO: Make sure that is all you show her!

RODRIGO: Of course.

(Rodrigo places his hand over Rosina's. Servant 2 enters, carrying a tray with a bottle of wine and a wineglass on it. He sets the tray on the table. Outside, a Serenader begins to play and sing. Señora Delgato gets up, moves to the table where a vase of flowers stands, picks up the vase, and starts to exit toward the balcony, and stops.)

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DELGATO: Come along, Rosina! *(Rosina looks at Rodrigo and sighs. Rosina and Señora Delgato exit. Rodrigo approaches the table where Servant 2 placed the bottle of wine. He sees the Count sitting and smiling. Rodrigo passes his hand in front of Count's face. No reaction. Rodrigo then pours some wine into the glass. From offstage shouts to Serenader.)* Go and yowl on some other fence!

(As Rodrigo turns to look toward the balcony, the Count looks over and sees the glass of wine, picks it up, drinks the wine, and then sets the glass back down and returns to smiling. Señora Delgato and Rosina enter and resume their places. Señora Delgato sets the empty vase on the table. The Count passes out, which causes a commotion. Hearing the commotion, Bartholo and Figaro enter, running.)

BARTHOLO: What is going on?

DELGATO: The Count!

(Figaro moves closer to the Count, takes his pulse, and glances over at Rodrigo. Rodrigo shrugs.)

BARTHOLO: Well?

FIGARO: Not to worry. The Count is merely napping.

[End of Freeview]