The planning behind Chautauqua Opera’s six-week performance season is a year-round process, and is overseen at every step by Michael Baumgarten, our director of production for the past 25 years. Michael has managed every budget, schedule and payroll ledger, has fielded countless questions from me and Jay Lesenger, has coordinated every production’s designers, and acted as resident lighting (and video) designer. His attention to detail and vast experience have been critical in the creation of this Beaumarchais Festival season.

This production of ¡Figaro! (90210) is dedicated to Michael Baumgarten with deepest thanks for his 25 years leading Chautauqua Opera.

— Steven Osgood

CAST (in order of appearance)

Susana
Laura León*

Figaro
Jesús Vicente Murillo*

Ms. Soon Yi-Nam
Wan Zhao*

Babayan
Edwin Joseph*

Bernard Curson (aka Li’l B Man)
Sidney Ragland*

Donna Curson
Timothi Williams*

Paul Conti
Matthew Cossack*

Basel
Patrick Dean Shelton*

Roxanne Conti
Lauren Yokabaskas*

Barbara Conti
Natalie Trumm*

Atzuko
Seunghee Lee*

* 2019 Chautauqua Opera Young Artist

CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION

Conductor/Music Director
Jorge Parodi

Stage Director
Eric Einhorn

Set Designer
Alan Muraoka

Lighting Designer
Michael Baumgarten

Costume Designer
B. G. FitzGerald

Wig/Makeup Designer
Martha Ruskai

Assistant Stage Director
Sara Widzer

Coach/Accompanist
Emily Jarrell Urbanek

Diction Coach/Supertitles
Miriam Charney

Technical Director
Allison Voth

Properties Master/Scenic Artist
John P. Woodey

Stage Manager
Theresa Pierce

Assistant Stage Managers
Emily Barber
Amelia Nordin
Kendra Green

CHAUTAUQUA OPERA ORCHESTRA

Violin I
Ming Gao, Concertmaster

Violin II
Diane Bruce, Principal

Viola
Christopher Fischer, Principal

Cello
Lars Kirvan, Principal

Bass
David Rosi, Principal

Piano
Emily Jarrell Urbanek

Steinway Spirio piano provided by Steinway & Sons.

CREDITS

Orchestral materials and supertitles furnished by Ragman Ventures LLC

Scenery constructed by Local #266 I.A.T.S.E

Lighting provided by Advanced Production Group

Wigs provided by Martha Ruskai

Special thanks to Eoin Russell

Performances June 28 at 4 p.m., June 30, July 7 & 14 at 7 p.m., July 26 at 4 p.m.

Premiere Performance: LA Opera, Los Angeles, 2015

Music by W. A. Mozart, Libretto and concept by Vid Guerrerio, based on Le Nozze di Figaro by Lorenzo Da Ponte (after the play La Folle Journée, ou Le Mariage de Figaro by Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais)
NOTES FROM THE LIBRETTIST

As a teenager, I first fell in love with The Marriage of Figaro as a musical comedy. It had great tunes, it was funny, and it never really occurred to me that it was any different than Bye Bye Birdie or The Fantasticks: it just had a lot more interesting music. I also loved the idea that it wasn’t just funny, that back in the day it was actually considered political and “dangerous.” The idea that you could make people hum, laugh and think at the same time is pretty much what inspired me to start writing in the first place.

In creating this adaptation, my respect for the three brilliant artists behind the original — author Pierre Beaumarchais, librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte and, of course, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart — has only increased. In response to a period of tremendous social change in late 18th-century Europe, they managed to create a work of art that both engaged and transcended the immediate political situation to get at the human experience of those changes.

While comparing the status of unauthorized immigrant workers with that of serfs in pre-Revolutionary Europe may be the most controversial element of ¡Figaro! (90210), my real purpose (like that of the original authors, I believe) has been to further discussion about the tremendous cultural shift currently underway in my own country.

One of the greatest things about living in a democracy is that, by design, national identity is not a fixed thing; it shifts with the population. As the U.S. becomes more and more multicultural, it is the design of our Founding Fathers that America’s social and political structures change to accommodate this.

Change, however, especially rapid change, is scary — now, as I’m sure it was back in 1786 — and this is where my unbounded admiration for Beaumarchais, Da Ponte and Mozart comes in. They have taught me that, at its best, theater is not about making important social statements or advancing political agendas, but crafting a relatable human experience through which audiences can process their own emotional reactions to the world around them.

What this means is that I hope you’ll find this updated version of one of the greatest operas ever written both respectful of the original, and relevant to your own life in today’s America. But, to be honest, I’d be happiest if you left the theater humming, laughing and simply loving The Marriage of Figaro as the brilliant musical comedy I’ve always believed it to be.

– Vid Guerrerio

One of the crucial questions asked by this work is “What does it mean to be American?” Members of the cast shared their responses:

“Ser americana para mi significa la oportunidad de soñar sin límites y poder expresarme libremente.”

(Being an American to me is to have the opportunity to dream without limits and being able to express myself freely in every way.)

— Laura León
(Ciudad de La Habana, Cuba)

“To me, being an American means being united, while treating our fellow Americans with respect, and supporting others in our shared and beloved freedom; it is acknowledging our differences, and embracing the knowledge that we are stronger because of them.”

— Lauren Yokabaskas
(Cape Elizabeth, Maine, USA)

“나에게 미국인이 된다는 의미는 문화적으로 내가 희망하고 꿈꾸던 것들을 어떠한 제약 없이 자유롭게 도전 할수 있는 기회가 주어진다는 것.”

(To me, being an American means to have dreams, hopes and opportunities without any restrictions.)

— Seunghee Lee
(Seoul, South Korea)

“Being an American means carrying the responsibility of fiercely pursuing justice and equality for all.”

— Timothi Williams
(Wellsburg, West Virginia, USA)

“Being an American means to be open to change, to be in a state of constant revolution.”

— Sidney Ragland
(Oakland, California, USA)
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For information, please contact the Chautauqua Foundation at 716.357.6404 or visit the Foundation Office, The Colonnade Building, First Floor.

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