

Recorded at Abbey Road in September 1962, this Glyndebourne *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* has always sat slightly to one side of the opera's recorded tradition. It has never quite been a front-runner in the usual league tables, nor has it relied on novelty or provocation. Instead, it reflects a particular musical temperament - one shaped by long familiarity with Rossini's theatre and by a belief that clarity, proportion and ensemble discipline count for more than surface brilliance.

At its centre is Vittorio Gui, whose association with Rossini extended back many decades before this recording. Gui was not interested in *Il barbiere* as a vehicle for comic exaggeration or vocal swagger. He approached it as musical drama, alive to rhythm, declamation and the careful calibration of pace. His tempos are steady without feeling static, and his refusal to rush the score allows Rossini's orchestral writing, often sharper and more ironic than it is given credit for, to register with unusual clarity. The performance moves forward by internal momentum rather than external gesture.

That approach is well served by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Glyndebourne Festival Chorus, recorded with notable transparency. Throughout the opera, particularly in the large finales, multiple strands of action are kept firmly in view. Ensemble writing is clearly articulated, and textual detail is consistently audible. The result is not theatrical display for its own sake, but dramatic coherence built from within the music.

The casting reinforces this conception. Sesto Bruscantini's Figaro exemplifies opera buffa at its most intelligent. Rather than asserting himself through sheer vocal weight, he leads from within the texture, energising the music through rhythm, articulation and an unerring sense of balance. Comic point is achieved without coarsening the line, and verbal detail is always alive.

As Rosina, Victoria de los Angeles offers a reading that is lyrical rather than predatory. Her singing is warm, flexible and finely controlled, shaping the character as a young woman whose intelligence expresses itself through poise and charm rather than overt spite. This is Rosina as strategist rather than virago, and the choice aligns closely with Gui's wider view of the opera. In the Act I duet *Dunque io son*, equilibrium rather than display is the governing principle, and the result is all the more persuasive for it.

Luigi Alva completes the central trio with elegance and stylistic ease. His Almaviva is light-footed, fluent and unfailingly musical, qualities that allow him to negotiate Rossini's florid writing without forcing tone or breaking character. Around them, a consistently strong supporting cast - notably Ian Wallace's thoughtfully characterised Dr Bartolo and Carlo Cava's measured Don Basilio - reinforces the sense of a true ensemble performance.

The recording also reflects a moment of reassessment in Rossini performance. By the early 1960s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* had accumulated a long history of accretions and distortions that obscured Rossini's original intentions. Gui had spent much of his career stripping away such habits, restoring a closer fidelity to Rossini's text and a sense of stylistic proportion. His approach aligns with reforms later consolidated in critical editions, but it is never doctrinaire. The aim is practical theatre - music that works because it is correctly judged.

Heard today, the performance has worn particularly well. What earlier listeners sometimes described as restraint now sounds like confidence. The recording makes no attempt to simulate operatic spectacle. It trusts the score, the text and the performers to carry the drama forward with precision and humanity.

This remastering preserves that essential character while allowing the sound to speak with greater tonal naturalness than some earlier issues have allowed. Without altering the fundamental perspective of the recording, hardness has been reduced and a more rounded sense of vocal and orchestral colour restored.

Taken as a whole, this *Barbiere* remains a model of musical good sense: urbane, alert and deeply attentive to Rossini's craft. It does not demand attention, but it rewards it, and continues to make its case with quiet authority.



rossini il barbiere di sivilgia

disc one: 71:22

1. *Sinfonia* (7:34)

Act 1, Scene 1

2. Piano, pianissimo, senza parlar (3:02)

3. Ecco ridente in cielo (4:21)

4. Ehi, Fiorello? ... Mio signore (1:10)

5. Mille grazie, mio signore (1:51)

6. *Recitativo*: gente indiscreta! (0:29)

7. La ran la le ra ... Largo al factotu (4:45)

8. *Recitativo*: Ah che bella vita! (6:03)

9. Se il mio nome saper voi bramate (2:55)

10. *Recitativo*: Oh, cielo! ... Nella stanza convien (1:10)

11. All'idea di quel metallo (3:05)

12. Piano, piano ... Un'altra idea! (2:00)

13. Oh, il meglio mi scordavo (1:41)

14. Ah, che d'amore la fiamma io sento (1:31)

Act 1, Scene 2

15. Una voce poco fa (5:29)

16. *Recitativo*: Sì, sì, la vincerò (4:36)

17. La calunnia è un venticello (4:29)

18. *Recitativo*: Ah! Che ne dite? (3:20)

19. Dunque io son (2:56)

20. Fortunati affetti miei (2:08)

21. *Recitativo*: Ora mi sento meglio (1:29)

22. A un dottor della mia sorte (5:18)

Glyndebourne Festival Chorus
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
conducted by Vittorio Gui

XR remastered by Andrew Rose

Recorded at Abbey Road Studios,
London, 4-7 & 9-11 September 1962
Stereo studio recordingCover artwork based on a photograph
of Sesto Bruscantini as Figaro

Total duration: 2hr 21:14

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CAST

Figaro – Sesto Bruscantini
Rosina – Victoria de los Angeles
Il conte d'Almaviva – Luigi Alva
Basilio – Carlo Cava
Bartolo – Ian Wallace
Berta – Laura Sarti
Fiorello – Duncan Robertson
Ambrogio – Harold Williams
Un ufficiale – John Rhys Evans

Glyndebourne Festival Chorus
Chorus Master: Myer Fredman

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disc two: 69:50

Act 1 (continued)

1. Finora in questa camera (0:33)
2. Ehi, di casa, buona gente (2:50)
3. Ah, venisse, il caro oggetto (2:45)
4. Dunque, lei vuol battaglia? (3:29)
5. Che cosa accadde (2:19)
6. Fermi tutti. Nessun si mova (1:22)
7. Fredda ed immobile (3:44)
8. Ma signor ... ma un dottor (5:02)

Act 2

9. *Recitativo*: ma vedi il mio destino! (0:49)
10. Pace e gioia sia son voi (2:27)
11. *Recitativo*: insomma, mio signore (2:53)
12. Contro un cor che accende amore (5:15)
13. *Recitativo*: bella voce! Bravissima! (0:38)
14. Quando mi sei vicina (1:05)
15. *Recitativo*: bravo, signor barbiere (2:47)
16. Don Basilio! ... Cosa veggo! (4:29)
17. Buona sera, mio signore (1:55)
18. Orsù, signor don bartolo (3:34)
19. Che vecchio sospettoso! (0:34)
20. Il vecchiotto cerca moglie (3:40)
21. *Recitativo*: dunque voi Don Alonso (3:01)
22. *Temporale* (2:59)
23. *Recitativo*: alfine eccoci qua (1:01)
24. Ah, qual colpo inaspettato! (4:31)
25. Zitti, zitti, piano, piano (1:28)
26. *Recitativo*: ah disgraziati noi! (2:22)
27. Di si felice innesto (2:18)

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