



Opera Lyra Ottawa presents The Barber of Bytown – a madcap opera for young audiences!

The challenge was to take Rossini's 3-hour plus version of *The Barber of Seville* and adapt it for elementary school audiences and families. **Ann Hodges** took on the challenge and produced a madcap, 50-minute adaptation that has since traveled across the country. Originally commissioned and produced by *Vancouver Opera* as the *Barber of Barkerville*, it has been performed more than 200 times in Calgary, Edmonton (*The Barber of Barrhead*) and now in Ottawa as ***The Barber of Bytown***.

"***The Barber of Bytown*** is an Ontario-specific adaptation of *The Barber of Barkerville*. Both adaptations are set during the gold rush. In this version it's during the Porcupine Gold Rush of 1909", explains director Ann Hodges. "It's definitely meant for kids but there are lots of laughs for adults as well."

Each performance is followed by a lively Q&A with the cast. The portable set is designed to tour elementary schools, the costumes are colourful and the singers are accompanied by pianist Judith Ginsburg (Opera Lyra Ottawa's Principal Repetiteur).

The Story:

The Barber of Bytown takes *Figaro* from his usual home in Seville, Spain, to Porcupine Lake, Ontario, at the turn of the 20th century. The Porcupine Gold Rush is on and prospectors seek and lose their fortunes as *Figaro*, a barber and jack-of-all-trades, endeavours to bring the young *Al* together with his lady love *Rosie* despite the devious dealings of the dastardly innkeeper, *Bart*.

The Characters:

Rosie is a clever hotel cook, a young Prairie girl who needs to free herself from her debts before she is free to marry. ***Bart*** is the scheming hotel owner, willing to cook the books in order to keep *Rosie* for himself and ***Al*** is a young miner who has recently struck gold at Porcupine Lake, but chooses to keep his fortune a secret until he has won *Rosie*'s heart. ***Figaro*** is the town barber, who hails from Ottawa, formerly known as Bytown. After all, there is more money to be had in a town of hairy miners than in a town of noisy politicians!

Things get really crazy as ***Al*** and ***Rosie*** try to get around ***Bart***, ***Figaro*** works to divert *Bart*, and hundreds of miners get really hungry. Watch out for flying pies!



The Cast:

The Opera Lyra Ottawa **Opera Studio** singers perform *The Barber of Bytown* at the 4th Stage, NAC and then tour elementary schools in the Ottawa Gatineau region. These emerging Canadian opera talents auditioned and were accepted into the respected Opera Studio program, which is the cornerstone of the company's education and outreach initiatives.

Emanuel Lebel – **Figaro** – baritone
Arminè Kassabian – **Rosie** - mezzo-soprano
David Lafleur – **Al** – tenor
Brian Wehrle – **Bart** – bass

For cast biographies, visit <http://www.operalyra.ca/studio/the-artists.php>

Here's how to book The Barber of Bytown Elementary School Show:

October 25, 26, 27, 28, 31 & November 1, 2, 3 @10:00 am or 1:30 pm

Call Amy – 613-233-9200, ext 231 or adesrosiers@operalyra.ca

See attached Barber of Bytown brochure for space requirements.

Public Shows at the 4th Stage NAC:

October 15 & 16 – 1:00 PM & 3:30 PM

October 21 – 7:00 PM

Tickets on sale now – Justine - 613-233-9200, ext 221



Excerpts from reviews across the country:

The Barber of Barrhead (Calgary) Opera Canada | 2009 | Clark, Hilary

"Calgary Opera Emerging Artists captivated audiences across Southern Alberta this Spring with Ann Hodges's *The Barber of Barrhead*, her Alberta-specific adaptation of *The Barber of Barkerville*, itself a clever English reworking of Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* created for Vancouver Opera. First in a special Calgary performance and then in small town gyms and community centres, Hodges' ingenuity with words and fitting them to Rossini's familiar music was admirable.

The quick and boisterous audience response proved the success of the collaboration....." "The hilarious, cartoonish action begins and ends happily with Al and Rosie united. "

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Barber of Barrhead a delightful Alberta production

BY TOM MURRAY, EDMONTONJOURNAL.COM FEBRUARY 18, 2011



From left: Actors: Dionne Sellinger, John Conlon, Joel Klein and Robert Clark, rehearse *The Barber of Barrhead* at the Trans Alta Barns in Edmonton

Photograph by: Jason Franson, edmontonjournal.com

"... the ingeniously witty way in which whole musical sections are cut, through interruption both physical and verbal..."

"The libretto has been changed to English, of course, and pop culture in jokes abound as the four make their way around a set made up of unadorned Christmas pines and a hotel front...It's a fast-moving, cartoonish production that doesn't

stint in piling on the Klondike clichés. There's a great deal of physicality, a few Three Stooges moments, enough action to make sure that the little ones won't be bored."