

**The derivation of Co-Opera’s 2018 production of Rossini’s**

***The Barber of Seville*.**

For 27 years Co-Opera has been Australia’s operatic troubadours. In the tradition of the 16th Century Italian **Commedia** **dell’ Arte** theatre players and the 19th Century Russian **Skomorokhi**, we create convenience by taking our performances to audience’s.

Co-Opera’s new production of ***The Barber of Seville*** draws together several threads derived from the notion of itinerant performance.

One such thread is Italian operatic colonialism: the kind of joy that is about the only thing that might give colonialism a good name! For several centuries, outposts of pure Italian opera existed in places as far apart and culturally disparate as London, Moscow, Buenos Aires and New York. And in the 19th Century**,** Italian opera companies travelled the world bringing productions of new works to the New World and The Antipodes. In this way operas by Verdi and others were being performed in Australia fewer than five years after they were written.

Common destinations for these itinerant artists were the goldfields of America and Australia...new money!

Co-Opera’s *The**Barber of Seville* fuses the idea of a European itinerant opera company with the hardship of life in a rough Australian gold-field. Of course, Italian touring opera companies performing in Ballarat in the 1880’s did actually present in [the still operating] Her Majesty’s Theatre. But our production has the artists performing in makeshift circumstances in the manner of Commedia players, the Skomorokhi...and Co-Opera!

Thus Dr Bartolo’s house, which in the original version [and at Her Majesty’s], was a dwelling of high class substance, in our goldfields’ location is a humble makeshift, tumbledown Aussie Outback shack. The main characters are highly sophisticated, fashion conscious “blow in” European artists, whereas the minor roles and chorus members are taken by ordinary town folk or gold diggers by day, using locals for economy purposes wherever possible, in the manner of the Commedia, the Skomorokhi…and Co-Opera!

Whilst our *Barber* has a quirky Aussie setting, the music, the comedy and the main cast costumes are all pure late 19C European sophistication. *The Barber* is the most popular and well known of all comic operas and with this production predominantly in English, all the mischievous twists and turns of the plots and the hilarious dramatic situations will be immediately appreciated. There’s a reason the music from *The Barber* features in more movie cartoons and more TV ads than any other famous opera. It’s the best. Sublime arias, ingenious patter songs, and comic choruses combine to make irresistible entertainment.