

From the Director

Tessa Bremner OAM

Hooray! Hooray! The Barber is coming. Co-Opera is coming to town!

For centuries in Europe this cry rang through the villages, towns and cities, but it was the performing groups known as the *Commedia dell’Arte* that were bringing entertainment to the people. There were high brow plays being performed in the big city theatres, but even these had an element of the *Commedia*. Stock characters such as the greedy old miser who wants the rich young heiress as his wife, the stupid doctor or lawyer who muddles everything, the cowardly boastful soldier, the young lovers and of course, the simple, cunning and much loved servant who manages to match make and ultimately bring a happy end to each trouble in the world; all create the stories that even today we recognise and that can be seen in *The Barber of Seville*.

The opera *The Barber of Seville* by Gioachino Rossini was inspired by the play of the same name by the French playwright, Pierre Beaumarchais. Characters straight from the *Commedia* leap out of the pages of music with brilliance, laughter and fun. The plot weaves in and out of wicked schemes, intrigues and dreams that will delight and entertain just as audiences were entertained centuries ago in small Italian villages.

While touring *Commedia dell’Arte* groups in Europe (and the *Skomorokhi* touring folk companies in Russia,) travelled from town to town, in wealthy Australia of the nineteenth century, gold prospectors longed for entertainment. Like their predecessors of the *Commedia* Italian opera companies toured to Australia and entertained the gold diggers.

Co-Opera is following in their footsteps by staging our *Barber* in an imaginary gold rush town. A touring company is bringing the opera to town with its colourful costumes and glorious music in a setting of gold prospecting and hope for riches.