

# Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais— From Fail to Glory

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## Abstract

We propose to present how the socio-political context can influence the success/recognition or failure of a creature as well as the value of an artist, in this case the playwright Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais. Its existence and creative activity took place during the French Enlightenment, a period with many ideological and aesthetic changes. If, through the social order, part of his creation was forbidden and accepted after several revisions, full success was through taking over and transfiguration into the work of creation. We especially refer to Figaro's Wedding and Barber of Seville, comedies that have been translated into opera pages by composers Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Gioacchino Antonio Rossini and Giovanni Paisiello.

## Keywords

Enlightenment, Dramaturgy, Opera

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## 1. Introduction

*Enlightenment* constituted an important turn in the spiritual development of human kind, as a significant victory of reason over mystical-religious mindsets in the Middle Ages. Arising in various countries, in various periods of time, this movement was the product of a well-defined socio-historical environment. *The Encyclopaedia* represents a junction point of the enlightened spirit, or of the *Age of Reason*, as it was called. With the centre in Paris, the movement acquired an international nature through the fact that it spread to other European cultures as well. The theoretical philosophy in the *Age of Light* is doubled by the practical, social-political philosophy. In the works of this field, natural issues, aspects regarding the sovereignty of peoples, equality of citizens or governing manner are approached. A synthesis on the enlightened mindset and in order to understand

the artistic view of the playwright we select: reason is specific to man; the *enlightened* man recognizes the *equality* of all men, the monarch is the first servant of the state preoccupied with the safety of his subjects, society must be structured based on a social contract between man and its fellowmen, denying feudal social hierarchy, the enlightened monarch represents the political ideal of the age, endowed with a capacity to understand the mechanisms of society and to mediate and harmonize relationships between social classes.

*Enlightenment* emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in England representing a new ideology opposed to the feudal one. The event that marked the beginning of this trend is the bourgeois revolution in England (1688). From a social point of view, Enlightenment corresponds to the emergence of the bourgeois, a class that finds in enlightened ideas an expression of its own philosophy. The emergence of Enlightenment is synthesised through the dynamism and revolutionary spirit of the bourgeois. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Europe had certain moments of balance due to the monarchy, which played the role of an arbitrator between the nobility and the ascending bourgeois. In the following century, Europe was marked by great political turmoil, caused by the absolute monarchies who waged conquest wars under various pretexts.

*The Age of Light* constituted an important moment in the spiritual development of human kind, a significant victory of reason over mystical-religious mindsets in the Middle Ages. Arising in various countries, in various periods of time, this ideological movement was the product of a well-defined social and historical environment. It emerged as a consequence necessary for the development of capitalist production relationships (a fact which also determined its universality), of the ingravescence of contradictions between the bourgeois trying to assert itself and the feudalism in the process of dissolving, between the exploited ones, on the one hand, and exploiters, on the other hand.

Certainly, very varied internal factors also generated a certain specification of Enlightenment from one country to another. But this natural diversification phenomenon does not remove the existence of a common heritage of ideas, resulted from the fundamental issues of the age themselves. In all concrete manifestations, Enlightenment presents itself under the general aspect as an ideology and philosophy, which seeks to achieve new forms of political, social and spiritual life, with a predominantly rationalist and anti-feudal nature (Gheorghiu & Cucu, 1966: pp. 10-15). From an ideological point of view, this trend crystallizes in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, being marked by the emergence of a great collective work (17 volumes and 11 volumes of sketches)—*The Encyclopaedia*, drafted under the coordination of Jean Jaques Rousseau. The Encyclopaedia synthesized all human knowledge accumulated from the oldest times until that moment.

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Enlightening in Germany achieved a greater subjective participation of the artists through the demonstrative impulse and Pre-Romantic notes, present in the representatives of the trend *Sturm und Drang*. German Enlightened aesthetics, founded by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten and

Johann Joachim Winckelmann, highlights the popular nature of art, as well as the representatives of *Sturm und Drang*. Johann Gottfried von Herder, Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller, Johann Wolfgang Goethe. In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, together with its accession, the bourgeois constituted a new and larger audience, which imposed its taste in music as well. The crusade of the bourgeois against aristocracy and absolutism is also manifested from a cultural point of view by cultivating music in new circles, detached from royal or princely courts and the church (Pascu & Boţocan, 2003: pp. 181-189).

In England, the critical realism of Daniel Defoe is distinguished with *Robinson Crusoe*, Jonathan Swift and *Guliver's Travels*, Henry Fielding, Jonathan Dryden, Anthony Ashley Cooper, David Hume and painters William Hogarth, Joshua Reynolds. In Germany Gotthold Ephraim Lessig with *Laocoon*, *Nathan the Wise*, and in Italy Metastasio (Pietro Antonio Domenico Trapassi), Giovanni Battista Vico, Carlo Goldoni cu *The Tyrants*, *Hostess* (Gheorghiu & Cucu, 1966: pp. 16-27).

## 2. French Enlightenment

In the second half of the 18 century, a new philosophical and literary trend of the *Enlightened* asserts itself in France, is actuated by the bourgeois, eager to impose the right to culture and government. If some thinkers adopted the theory of the *enlightened monarch*, capable of removing the principles of the absolutist regime, others criticize the aristocratic system, considering it a harmful drift from the normal order, envisioning the replacement with an "*enlightened republic*". The philosophers' faith in the power of universal reason was based on the progress and successes of science, encouraged by the bourgeois and on the unlimited trust in man's force, detached from the communication with the divine. By abolishing the monarchy and by the shocks given to the Catholic Church, the French Revolution shook not only the French society, but also the entire monarchal Europe.

French Enlightenment goes throughout its evolution through several periods. Its premises are prepared by a period of transition (1688-1715), having as representative Pierre Bayle, renowned for the anti-metaphysical and anti-theological scepticism. The second is the period of the Old Enlightenment (1715-1750), having as representative figures Voltaire (*Lettres philosophique*, *Essai sur les moeurs*, *Brutus*, *Zadig*, *Candide*, *Traité sur la tolerance*, *Dictionnaire philosophique*) and Montesquieu (*Système des Idées*, *Lettres persanes*, *La damnation éternelle des païens*, *De l'esprit des lois*, *Les cahiers de Montesquieu. Mes pensées*) and who, from a philosophical point of view, do not exceed the positions of deism. The period of absolute assertion of the Enlightenment is between the period 1750-1789 and is characterised through the reinforcement of the materialist philosophical trend promoted by Denis Diderot (*Pensées philosophiques*, *L'Encyclopédie*, *Mystification ou l'histoire des portraits*, *Paradoxe sur le comédien*, *Principes philosophiques sur la matière et le mouvement*, *Le neveu de*

Rameau), Julien Offray de La Mettrie, Paul Henri Thiry d'Holbach, Claude Adrien Helvétius (Zamfirescu, 1973: pp. 274-277). Moreover, in this period the critical thinking of Jean-Jaques Rousseau (*Les Muses Galantes*, *Pygmalion*, *Daphnis et Chloé*, *Dissertation sur la musique modern*, *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les homes*, *Discourse on Political Economy*, *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, *Émile, ou de l'éducation*, *Du contrat social*, *Les Confessions*) is also asserted.

We mention several fundamental ideas of the mindset of French encyclopaedists: *rationalism*, *laic spirit*, *religious tolerance*, *emancipation through culture and the education of the people*. Concepts such as these were also promoted: *equality and natural right*, *people sovereignty*, *governing system through the enlightened monarchy-republic* (the monarch as an enlightened philosophic man with the role of harmonizing the classes' interests). Through enlightenment, tolerance, culture, understanding and work, man can achieve a rational and universal perception and a self-control. It had a resounding echo in the age making available an important instrument of knowledge and developing the critical spirit and taste for science of the public. Hence, Enlightenment spread in all European countries, wearing forms specific for each.

The enlightened aesthetics rejected what was formal in Classicism, the usage of mythological theme, as characters emerged as abstract models, out of touch with life, instead of being living models, taken from everyday life. It does not give up the model of Ancient culture, but characters were no longer idealized. Seeking the veridical and the natural, the Enlightened tended to make from art an imitation of nature and to take various themes from real life. In theatre, as in the opera, new, realist genres shall emerge: antic, comic and singspiel. As in the antic or comic opera, subjects were no longer mythological or taken from the life of aristocracy, the nobleman spirit diminished its influence in art, but did not disappear, as certain philosophers believed that the reformation of society was possible through enlightened monarchs (Gheorghiu & Cucu, 1966: pp. 31-38).

Cultural life is dominated by *Classicism*, manifested in the French literature in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In the centre of Classical creations is man, the Classical type having an ideal beauty, without individual particularities. Characters are ideal, in ideal circumstances, full of virtues and without an internal evolution, being driven by reason and not passions. Classical aesthetics tends towards the simplicity and clarity of expression, towards the logic of dealing with themes, avoiding strong contrasts and detail excesses, the universe being considered a harmonious whole. If the law of balance and harmony is at the basis of the construction of architectonic monuments, the action of dramatic works follows the rule of the three units: of place, of time and of space. The theme of dramatic creations must be unitary, carried out in the same place and throughout one day (Pascu & Boţocan, 2003: pp. 179-180). Founded on the Cartesian rationalism and on Renaissance reminiscences, Classical aesthetics was also determined by the spiritual conditions imposed by the court. The perfection of the form, the

balance of means of expression and the cult of virtue are dominant, but there are also certain artificial and rhetorical notes, typical for the nobleman spirit.

In music, Napolitan opera, the works of Jean Philippe Rameau, respond to the requirements of Classical aesthetics, but the most Classical is the work of Christoph Willibald Gluck (*La clemenza di Tito, Orfeo ed Euridice, Alceste, Iphigénie en Aulide, Ippolito, Armide, Iphigénie en Tauride*). As an effect of the rationalist spirit, in his work one can feel the minutely drafted expression in order to correspond to the meaning of the text (Ştefănescu, 1996: pp. 45-46). Classicism gave important values in literature, architecture, painting, sculpture and music. French language is illustrated by renowned names such as: Pierre Corneille (*Médée, Le Cid, La Mort de Pompée, Tite et Bérénice, Œdipe*), Jean Racine (*Andromaca, Britannicus, Bérénice, Iphigénie, Phèdre*) Molière (*Les Précieuses ridicules, L'École des maris, L'École des femmes, Le Misanthrope, L'Avare, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, Les Fourberies de Scapin, Les Femmes savants, Le Malade imaginaire, L'Amour médecin*), Jean de la Bruyère (*Les Caractères ou Les mœurs de ce siècle*), Charles Perrault (*Le siècle de Louis de Grand, Ma Mère l'Oye*), Montesquieu (*Persian Letter*), Voltaire, Denis Diderot, Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais with *Sevilla Barber și Figaro's Wedding*. In architecture, the following are being distinguished: Ange-Jacques Gabriel, Jacques-Germain Soufflot, and in painting: Nicolas Poussin, André Watteau, Jean-Honoré Fragonard, François Boucher (Gheorghiu & Cucu, 1966: pp. 16-27).

### 3. Pierre Augustin Caron De Beaumarchais and His Comedies with Character *Figaro*

**Pierre—Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais** (1732-1799), adventurous spirit, businessperson with amazing spiritual resources, remarks himself on the occasion of a trial, when, in order to defend himself, published *Memoirs*, which showed unsuspected literary qualities. In theatre, he managed to give two plays that made him famous: *Sevilla Barber* and *Figaro's Wedding*, plays imbued with a strong and savoury comic, as it had never been made on the French tauge since Molière (Sadoveanu, 1973: pp. 24-27). But this writer gifted with the comic genius, expressed his preference for the bourgeois drama. His first play, *Eugénie*, is a drama of this type and, after the great success of *Figaro's Wedding*, he returned to *the serious theatre* with *The Guilty Mother*. In it we must certainly see the great influence of Diderot, for whom he had a great admiration. Beaumarchais formulated his conception about theatre in the preface to *Eugénie*, which bears the title of *Attempt on the serious dramatic genre* (1767). He claims that theatre must pursue the audience's moralization. The comic play, causing laughter, is not appropriate for this purpose, while drama speaks to the heart regarding certain unfair miseries and its effect is deeper and more lasting. Regarding Classical rules, he manifested the same hostility as the other contemporaneous playwrights, stating that rules could have prevented some genies to manifest themselves, but they could have never created them. The achieved the bourgeois

drama that Beaumarchais esteemed so much in three plays: *Eugénie*, *The Two Friends* and by the end of his activity, *The Guilty Mother*. The latter meant yet another drifting from the progressive position in *Figaro's Wedding*.

The three dramas prove that their author did not have the qualities necessary for such a type of theatre. The moral lesson that he wanted to give, as well as the social action that he wanted to exercise, will be much better achieved in the comedy. Although he considered it a minor genre, he nonetheless managed to give two everlasting creations: *Sevilla Barber* and *Figaro's Wedding*. He will support the assertion of the values of culture and the bourgeois art, becoming, at the zenith of his literary career, one of its brightest and most representative advocates. Under these circumstances, Beaumarchais became the hero of the day: in 1773 he wrote against councilman Goëzman the four *Memoirs* which achieve what the dramas could not, namely present to the audience the genius of an authentic author and at the same time relate a great playwright. His comedies remain unique in his whole production in terms of originality and artistic value in the entire French literature and what Beaumarchais was to generate after the comedies is rather depressing.

He made his appearance with the play *Eugénie* which was played at *Théâtre Français*. The play is inspired from a complication occurred in the Caron family: a certain Clavijo—Spanish citizen—did not respect his matrimonial engagements towards one of Beaumarchais's sisters; therefore, as a good and caring brother, he leaves to Spain in order to make things right. From this fact, *Eugénie* suddenly took birth, the soupy drama of a young woman seduced by a nobleman who in the end remorsefully admits his guilt. In 1770, another drama emerges: *Deux amis* (*The Two Friends*) about a merchant plagued by fate, that is finally saved by the devotion of a true friend.

Both plays were received reticently by the audience and neither—as neither the last drama written in 1792, *La mère coupable* (*The Guilty Mother*) shall manage, shall not exceed the limit of mediocrity and concluded the career of playwright. The play who was to be the last of a trilogy of Figaro (being preceded by *Sevilla Barber*—1775 and *Figaro's Wedding*—1781), has the subject of a drama: hypocrite Bégarrs (in whom the audience finds a known enemy of Beaumarchais—an infamous lawyer named Bergasse) introduces himself into the Almoviva family with the purpose of tearing it apart. An intendant—Figaro, rather conventionally—outmanoeuvres his plans. Apart from the fact that he is a tedious character through his platitude, he also appears in the position of a reformed man who declares that his payment is no other than that of dying, a faithful servant, at the court of count Almoviva (Beaumarchais, 1967: pp. 22-25). Also without catching the attention of the audience he wrote in 1796 a memorialistic work: *Mes six époques* (*My Six Epochs*). His first comedy *Sevilla Barber*, revived an old subject, dealt with several times, amongst other by Molière. Old Bartholo, Rozina's guardian, wanted to keep Rozina so that she could become his wife; but count Almoviva, helped by his ingenious valet, Figaro, kidnaps her.

The triumph of youth and love is insured due to the ingenuity of a valet. The author was an innovator. Unlike comedy authors up to that point, Beaumarchais understood to closely connect the nature of the characters, as Diderot had requested, to their social condition; so that the audience could find in Bartholo the reactionary person who hates all progressive ideas of his age; in count Almaviva, the world could see however tough, abusive and corrupt aristocracy; and in Figaro, the representative of popular masses in the “*third scene*”.

At the same time, Beaumarchais endeavours to not weigh the comedy with the moralizing ideas of the petite bourgeois, but to imprint a pronounced scenic dynamism, an unusually quick rhythm, a brilliant dialogue, replies in most part only of two-three lines, a destructive satirical acid and an extremely voluble humour. Finally, the author used in his comedies types of situations, so that through them he could criticize certain individual vices and revolting social abuses, with a violence not encountered in comedies up to him (Beaumarchais, 1967: pp. 26-28). Thus, on the scene of royal theatre, an author dared to bring, to the fore, a man from the masses who stated that the nobility imagined themselves to be good when they did not harm one directly, that servants have moral qualities that serve their masters, that in the given society one can carry out any abjection, without being punished, if one has a title or an official position.

In his second comedy, *Figaro's Wedding*, the action in his first comedy is continued. Figaro helped the Count to marry Rosina, but now the Count was bored of her and wanted to prevent his valet from marrying Susana, Rosina's maid, who the frivolous Count likes. *Figaro's Wedding* was released only five years prior to the outbreak of the revolution in 1789. In this comedy, the entire revolt of the “*third scene*” was focused against the privileged classes. Through Figaro, it was no longer about a valet, but the author himself; and the poor and humble mass is symbolized here, who—for the first time on stage—proudly, decisively and vehemently confronts the abuses of the feudal-absolutist regime. Thus, this comedy was considered to be the “*dramatic prelude of the French Revolution*”, and Napoleon defined *Figaro's Wedding* as being the “*revolution in action*” (Pandolfi, 1971: p. 266).

Published in 1784, a masterpiece of Beaumarchais's dramatic creation, in *Figaro's Wedding* together with *Sevilla Barber* we have a complete and continuous action. Thus, it is often said that through the valet, Figaro, the mass is speaking, he represents the revolt spirit of the people deprived of justice and treated indolently by the privileged class. *Figaro's Wedding* is more original than *Sevilla Barber*, its satire being more profound, more direct. From the point of view of certain commentators of Beaumarchais's work, we find again in this play borrowings from Scarron and Molière, from Marivaux and Voltaire—and the list can be continued. From Beaumarchais's genius one can exclude imitation and admits only the establishment of certain appreciations above which his personality and originality are first and foremost obvious.

Actually, in *Figaro's Wedding* we find his first play, *Sevilla Barber*, but with a

more adamant mood. It is not about the count's sentimental affairs, but of his own; then, he does not appear as an inferior but, even with Almaviva, is found now as a rival and treats him on the same level. Even superior to the count. Certainly, we assist to a comedy where one calls upon all the procedures and resources of the comic genre. The intrigue, on the other hand, seems innocent. But how many things are said from this amorous intrigue, and, especially, how many serious, disturbing, acute theme for the 18<sup>th</sup> century, overlap it. Figaro emerges here as a genuine prosecutor opposing despotism—liberty and privileges—equality (Hugh, 2006: pp. 7-8).

*Figaro's Wedding* remarks itself, marking one of the critical moment of the French theatre. It expresses, in the most direct manner, some of the main positions of the “*third scene*”. Subtext is extremely rich in ideas, most of them being allusively stated. Some of them impose an emphasis. Firstly, the fact that here, count Almaviva, being once again a premise for the action, only triggers it, thus holding the role of the valet in the old comedies. At the same time, he is placed in a negative position, by comparison even with himself: while in *Sevilla Barber* he holds love above social prejudices, here he invokes a seniority privilege—the right to the first night—to which, he had allegedly gave up. It is the main antinomy of the comedy. At the opposite pole from the count, the Figaro couple emerges—Susana, who, from a moral point of view, is superior to the count; and Almaviva appears in the scene only to be defeated. But up to his defeat, which is at the same time symbolic and has the meaning of a prognostic, of a political warning, everything is challenged, all the vices, the entire failure of the feudal regime (Pandolfi, 1971: pp. 271-274).

#### 4. Transliteration into Opera Music of Comedies *Figaro's Wedding and Sevilla Barber*

Of the three plays in the dramatic trilogy of Beaumarchais, having as common characters Figaro, Count Almaviva and Rosina, written towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the most renowned is *Figaro's Wedding*. Beaumarchais introduces into the dramatic text themes from the point of view of enlightened ideas such as: *women emancipation, equality of social classes* (the main character is valet Figaro, not count Almaviva). The characters and implicitly, the action in the playwright's creation, reflects the change in social attitudes before, after and during the French Revolution. Figaro and Almaviva emerged for the first time in *Le Sacristan*, which he wrote in 1765 and which he renamed “*an interlude imitating the Spanish style*”. *Sevilla Barber* has a theme the love between count Almaviva and young Rosina, which ends with their wedding. The second comedy has more action. Figaro finds his parents that get married at his wedding with Susane. *The Guilty Mother* is a drama in which we find Rosina, who gave birth to an illegitimate baby and the action carries out around this fact.

*Sevilla Barber* was released in 1775. The continuation *Figaro's Wedding* initially passed the censors in 1781, but its representation was immediately forbid-



den by Ludovic the 16<sup>th</sup>, after he had personally read it. The king was not content with the manner in which the play ridiculed the aristocracy. In the following three years, Beaumarchais revised it several times, in order to be able to get past the censor. The king lifted the interdiction in 1784. The play was released in that year and was extremely popular amongst aristocrats as well. Mozart's opera was released two years later. Beaumarchais's last play, *La Mère coupable* was released in 1792 in Paris. In order to pay a tribute to the great French playwright Molière, who wrote the original title of the play, Beaumarchais renamed *La Mère coupable* to *L'autre Tartuffe*. Figaro represents the masses' voice, of the "third scene" criticizing certain social institutions: justice is presented as abusive and corrupt, being eager to immense enriching and using the cruelest means for this purpose, abusive and absurd administration in its measures of oppression. The main attack is directed against the regime of feudal privileges. Figaro character is contrasted with the immoral nobleman. The subliminal conflict between Figaro and count Almaviva must be understood from a social point of view, in line with the differences between the privileged classes and the mass. Through Figaro's monologue, the playwright plainly speaks about the social issue, as the message that it transmits can be considered to be the preamble for *Bourgeois Grievance Notes* in 1789.

The fundamental ideological issue is the one of the women's status in the bourgeois society. However, the movement for *women's emancipation* shyly begins in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, together with the spread of ideas of freedom and equality of the Enlightened philosophers. Between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the married woman lived in a strict household isolation. Marriages were concluded only within the same social circle, the spirit of caste prevailing everywhere. Girls, whose spiritual education was almost non-existent, were raised in the most strict household isolation. The entire joy of life was repressed under a pile of conduct rules that killed the spirit. At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of women's rights became the central point in political debates both in France and in the Great Britain. In that period, a part of the representative of the Enlightenment, who defended the democratic principles of equality and challenged the idea that only a small number of privileged people must lead the great majority of the population, believed that these principles should be applied only to those of the same sex and race. Returning to the musical achievement of these dramaturgical creations, we can mention the following: the recognition and glory of the playwright is closely connected to the music of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Giovanni Paisiello and Gioacchino Rossini (Wood, 1964: pp. 26-28).

*Le Nozze di Figaro* (original title) by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is an opera where innocence and eroticism hover. We witness of long and slow overthrow of situations, and the balance is in a continuous movement: apparently, the males has control; however, at the end of the story, the female genre is the one that prevails (Ştefănescu, 1996: pp. 223-226). *Figaro's Wedding* was released on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1786 in Burgtheater, in Vienna. Even Mozart presided at this release, which

proved to be a phenomenal success. After the release a series of nine representations followed. However, the success of the release cannot be compared to what happened a year later in Prague. In the spring of 1787 *Figaro's Wedding* was presented in Prague, the second capital of the Habsburg Empire, also under the musical leadership of Mozart and found a genuine triumph. Surrendering formal perfection, Italian opera in the 18<sup>th</sup> century focuses on its beauty and on the symmetrical execution of the music, neglecting the correspondence of the music with the text. Without detaching the music from the drama, Mozart gives priority to music in the portraiture of the character and dramatic situations. He uses generalising images of instrumental music in the opera type, the arias of Cherubino in *Figaro's Wedding* being typical in this regard. Although Beaumarchais's play had been forbidden, at first, in Vienna, due to the satire to the aristocracy, considered dangerous in the years prior to the French Revolution, the opera became one of the most successful works of Mozart, being the first of the three collaborations that Mozart had with Lorenzo da Ponte.

Mozart executed the opera with the help of librettist Lorenzo da Ponte, who transformed comedy into a libretto, in six weeks, rewriting it in Italian and eliminating all political references. Da Ponte especially, replaced Figaro's discourse against nobility, with an angry aria against unfaithful wives. Moreover, in contrast with the theatre play, Mozart's comic opera has only four acts, and the name of several characters was changed, Fanchette—the gardener's daughter—became Barbarina, and judge Don Gusman Brid'Oison became Don Curzio; he also gave up several small characters (Ştefănescu, 1996: pp. 223-226). The symbiosis between action, characters, adaptation of the libretto and music proves the perfection of the composition. The capacity of being sung of the arias, duets and ensembles, supported by the orchestra apparatus, treated as a collective, commentating character accompanying the entire action, offers us the image of a musical transliteration that achieves perfection. Analyzing the Figaro Wedding comedy, we discover a complex character with a mature and common sense of the simple man. Very natural and compelling are Figaro's remarks. Figaro must be understood as a subtle philosopher of time, which offers an interpretation of the dual condition of the human condition—of the privileged social status—Almaviva—and of the one to be subjected—Figaro. Figaro's moral strength is evident from the strategies he uses to save Suzana's honor and, implicitly, Rosina. All his imagination, all his effort, is put to the service of the human dignity, of the common sense relations that the simple man of the people has, but from whom he abdicates the bourgeoisie (Sbircea, 1964: p. 121).

"*Sevilla Barber*" was adapted twice for the opera, the first time by Giovanni Paisiello, in 1782 under the title *Sevilla Barber, ovvero precauzione inutile*, then by Gioacchino Antonio Rossini, in 1816, under the title of *Sevilla Barber*. Beaumarchais's comedy contains four acts. One of the most renowned *Sevilla Barber* or *Useless Precautions* opera is the one composed by Giovanni Paisiello, on a libretto by Giuseppe Petrosellini. A serious conflict arised between Paisiello and

young Rossini, when the first saw his successful creation “*threatened*” by the new opera of the second one and, even though Rossini had to gain in terms of posterity, Paisiello’s opera is also extremely attractive. The opera was presented for the first time on September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1782 at the Imperial Court, Saint Petersburg. The story essentially follows Beaumarchais’s comedy. Paisiello’s and Rossini’s creations are similar with subtle differences. Petrosellini’s libretto emphasizes the love story firstly and less the subliminal *political-social context* (Pascu & Boţocan, 2003: pp. 191-203). Several adaptations of *Sevilla Barber* preceded Paisiello’s version, but his comic opera was the first who reached success on a large scale. The opera proved to be the greatest success of Paisiello. Even after the release of Gioacchino Antonio Rossini on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1816 (Teatro “Argentina” in Rome), Paisiello’s continued to be more popular. However, with the passing of time, the situation changed. As a version, Rossini gained popularity, and the one of Paisiello diminished.

Opera *Sevilla Barber* (*Almaviva* or *Useless Precautions*) of Gioacchino Antonio Rossini was composed in only 13 days and is a convincing example of the evolution of opera music. The most successful version is the Rossinian one, on the libretto of Cesare Sterbini due to all the psychical and social features with which Beaumarchais had invested the main character. Figaro is no longer the insinuator of old tricks, but a cunning and active person, representative of the ascending petite bourgeois, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Ştefănescu, 2002: pp. 30-36).

## 5. Conclusion

Beyond ideologies and preferences, *Figaro’s Wedding* and *Sevilla Barber* of Pierre August Caron de Beaumarchais as well as the musical transliterations executed through the operas created by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Gioacchino Antonio Rossini remain the masterpieces of universal culture with hundreds of representations on all theatre and opera stages in the world. By means of *mass-media*, these are permanently promoted, reaching a large audience, as a factor of education and enlightenment, a plea for a genuine cultural-artistic education.

These art masterpieces reflect with sagacity the social problems of the age, refer to new liberal thinking, human rights in general and women’s right to emancipate, in particular. Art becomes a means of social revolt, progress and optimization at the individual and collective level. The genius of these creations from the Enlightenment period consists in discussing aspects and issues of social organization, individual liberties, and modernization of forms of political leadership. Until today, these issues continue to be discussed and continually improved (Weinenberg, 1962: p. 151).

The theatrical and musical production was also an intention to highlight the cultural, and not the educational, impact they had over time, the comedies and the works that had as main character the famous Figaro, always contemporary. A positive influence in the epoch regarding the status of women in society, the

pertinent analysis of the reality of time is a sign that the arts have been able to determine social changes. In the present study we highlighted the socio-political, ideological and aesthetic context in which an artistic production can have recognition or, on the contrary, be censored. By means of an alternative creation, the artistic product can obtain the recognition of value, in this case the Beaumarchais creation.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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