

## FURBERIA

"Furberia" is characteristic of many operatic characters. It can be translated as 'shrewd' or 'cunning' and it carries a connotation of immorality (or at least of amorality). An old saying goes "Quando i furbi vanno in processione, il diavolo porta la croce." (When the furbi walk in a procession, the devil carries the crucifix.). This ability to hide one's true self until the time is right to act is an aspect of "furberia". Machiavelli seems to have respected furberia and praises several of his characters for having wisely utilized it in their dealings with people. A notable example of a "furbo" is Liverotto da Fermo, a ruthless character who is one of the models of a successful despot in Machiavelli's "Il Principe" (Chapter 8). Liverotto had spent his youth denied access to his native town, Fermo, which was controlled by his uncle. Feigning great family love and loyalty, Liverotto writes to his uncle for permission to visit. He would be content to be accompanied by a small armed escort. Granted permission, he enters, has his uncle put to death, and takes over the town. Furberia can be seen at work in many operatic characters: Figaro and Rosina have the techniques down pat. So do Basilio, Bartolo, Figaro, Scarpia, Minnie. The list is long. Oroveso, the High Druid Priest in *Norma* shows a kind of furberia when he advises the Druids to hide their hatred of the Romans ("Ma consiglio è il simular./Divoriamo in cor lo stegno/Tal che Roma estinto il creda!"/But good counsel is to dissimulate./ Let's devour i.e., hide in our hearts scorn/So that Rome believes it to be extinct.")

Behind Rosina's apparent conformity and docility is a Will of Iron! Whoever sings this cavatina should keep these points in mind: bags of feminine charm, yes, but also loads of determination (especially in those future tenses).