

The *bel canto* “school”

Composers:

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868)

Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)

Vincenzo Bellini (1801-1835)

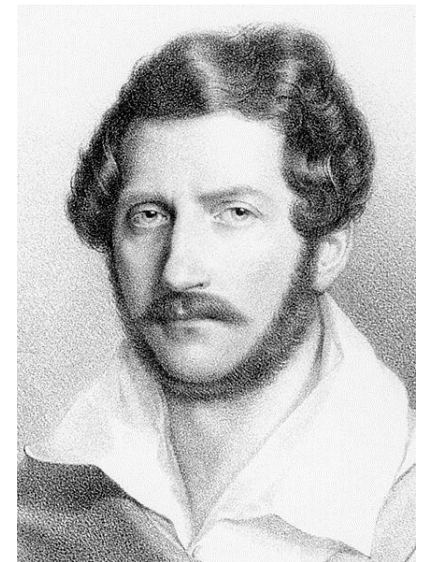


GIOACCHINO A. ROSSINI.



Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848)

- Born in Bergamo (North of Italy)
- Studied at Mayr's school (full scholarship)
- Married to Virginia Vasselli who died of cholera
- 3 children died in infancy or stillborn
- Contracted syphilis and suffered from insanity
- Wrote 73 operas
- 1830 first international success *Anna Bolena*
- 1832 breaks contract with Naples
- 1832 romantic comedy *Elisir d'amore* (MI)
- Early 1835 Paris, then return to Naples for
- 1835 *Lucia di Lammermoor* (mad scene) great success
- 1843 comic masterpiece *Don Pasquale*
- deteriorating health and embarrassing moments (cerebro-spinal degeneration of syphilitic origin)
- In sanatorium in Paris for 17 months then
- Return to Bergamo where he dies



Donizetti's operas (*plus* one unperformed and 4 second versions)

1. Il Pigmaliione (1816)
2. Enrico di Borgogna (1818)
3. Una follia (1818) (lost)
4. Le nozze in villa (1821)
5. Pietro il grande (1819)
6. **Zoraida di Granata (1822)**
7. La zingara (1822)
8. La lettera anonima (1822)
9. Chiara e Serafina, ossia I pirati (1822)
10. Alfredo il grande (1823)
11. L'ajo nell'imbarazzo (1824)
12. Emilia di Liverpool (1824)
13. Alahor in Granata (1826)
14. Elvida (1826)
15. Gabriella di Vergy (1826)
16. Olivo e Pasquale (1827)
17. Otto mesi in due ore (1827)
18. Il borgomastro di Saardam (1827)
19. Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali (1827)
20. L'esule di Roma (1828)
21. Alina, regina di Golconda (1828)
22. Gianni di Calais (1828)
23. Il paria (1829)
24. Il giovedì grasso (1829) (Il nuovo Pourceaugnac)
25. Il castello di Kenilworth (1829)
26. I pazzi per progetto (1830)
27. Il diluvio universale (1830)
28. Imelda de' Lambertazzi (1830)
29. **Anna Bolena (1830)**
30. Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali (1831)
31. Gianni di Parigi (1831)
32. Francesca di Foix (1831)
33. La romanziera e l'uomo nero (1831)
34. Fausta (1832)
35. Ugo, conte di Parigi (1832)
36. **L'elisir d'amore (1832)**
37. Sancia di Castiglia (1832)
38. Il furioso all'isola di San Domingo (1833)
39. Parisina d'Este (1833)
40. Torquato Tasso (1833)
41. Lucrezia Borgia (1833)
42. Rosmonda d'Inghilterra (1834)
43. Gemma di Vergy (1834)
44. Marino Faliero (1835)
45. Maria Stuarda (1835)
46. **Lucia di Lammermoor (1835)**
47. Belisario (1836)
48. Il campanello (1836)
49. Betly, o La capanna svizzera (1836)
50. L'assedio di Calais (1836)
51. Roberto Devereux (1837)
52. Maria de Rudenz (1838)
53. Poliuto (1838)
54. Pia de' Tolomei (1838)
55. Le duc d'Albe (1839)
56. Lucie de Lammermoor (1839)
57. L'ange de Nisida (1839; unfinished)
58. **La fille du régiment (1840)**
59. Les martyrs (1840)
60. La favorite (1840)
61. Adelia (1841)
62. Rita (1841)
63. Maria Padilla (1841)
64. Linda di Chamounix (1842)
65. **Don Pasquale (1843)**
66. Maria di Rohan (1843)
67. Dom Sébastien (1843)
68. Caterina Cornaro (1844)

Donizetti's style

- Early more “rossinian”
- Primitive dramatic power of music
- Extrovert, hearty romanticism
- Obsessive dotted rhythms, absolute regularity of periodization, primitive harmony
- Catchy rhythms
- Miraculous spontaneity of melodies
- Sometimes Rossinian, more romantic vitality, later influenced by Bellini
- In comedies blend of humor and tenderness
- Responsive to individual qualities of singers
- Skill at presenting the conventional forms in ways that appear fresh
- Moments of real pathos alongside great comic humor.



Berlioz's memoirs

“Out of a sense of duty I made myself go to hear the latest opera. Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'amore* was being given at the Canobbiana. I found the theater full of people talking in normal voices, with their backs to the stage. The singers, undeterred, gesticulated and yelled their lungs out in the strictest spirit of rivalry. At least I presumed they did, from their wide-open mouths; but the noise of the audience was such that no sound penetrated except the bass drum. People were gambling, eating supper in their boxes, etc etc. Consequently, perceiving it was useless to expect to hear anything of the score, which was then new to me, I left. It appears that Italians do sometimes listen. I have been assured by several people that it is so. The fact remains that music to the Milanese, as to the Neapolitans, the Romans, the Florentines and the Genoese, means arias, duets, trios, well sung; anything beyond that provokes only aversion or indifference.”

Donizetti's dedication

In a letter to the publisher Ricordi (31 July 1832) Donizetti indicated his wish for the dedication: “Giacché a me per tua gentilezza lasci la scelta della dedica *dell'Elisir d'amore*, io te ne sono graditissimo, e questa sia *Al Bel Sesso di Milano*... chi piú di quello sa distillarlo? Chi meglio di quello sa dispensarlo?”. (Since you are so kind as to let me choose the dedication of *Elisir d'amore*, I am very grateful and I want it to be *to the fair sex of Milan*: who can better distill it? Who can better dispense it [the elixir]?)

Ricordi did not accept it...



L'elisir d'amore (1832)



- Libretto adapted by Felice Romani from Scribe's libretto for Auber's opera *Le philtre*, from the Italian play *Il filtro*.
- Commission of the Teatro della Cannobiana (now Teatro Lirico Giorgio Gaber in Milan) with 14 days lead time to rehearsals. Gave Romani a week of that for the libretto.
- Censors came to the dress rehearsal to give their final approval (which normally was given before the rehearsal period began)

Characters



- Each character has his/her own idiom:
 - **Adina**, S, rich and capricious landlady (flirtatious and tender)
 - **Nemorino**, T, young and simple peasant, in love with Adina (simplicity and depth of feeling)
 - **Doctor Dulcamara**, Buffo (B), wandering doctor (all garrulity)
 - **Belcore**, B, a sergeant (swaggering virility)
 - [**Giannetta**, S, peasant girl]



Synopsis act 1

Nemorino, a poor peasant, is in love with Adina, a beautiful landowner, who torments Nemorino with her indifference. When Nemorino hears Adina reading to her workers the story of Tristan and Iseult, he is convinced that a magic potion will gain Adina's love for him. Sergeant Belcore appears with his regiment and immediately proposes marriage to Adina. The traveling quack salesman, Dulcamara arrives, selling his bottled cure-all to the townspeople. Nemorino innocently asks Dulcamara if he has anything like Iseult's love potion. Dulcamara says he does, selling Nemorino... wine. Dulcamara tells Nemorino the potion will not take effect until the next day. Nemorino drinks it, feeling its effects immediately. Emboldened Nemorino encounters Adina, and although she teases him mercilessly, the audience senses that the attraction just might be mutual. Nemorino's confidence that tomorrow he will win Adina by virtue of the elixir, causes him to act indifferently toward her, which upsets her. She agrees to Belcore's suggestion that they marry immediately as he has to ship off the next morning. Adina gauges Nemorino's reaction with despair, but Nemorino is panicked, and cries out for Doctor Dulcamara to come to his aid.

Synopsis act 2

At Adina's wedding party the notary arrives but Adina delays the signing because she wants to wait for Nemorino. Meanwhile Nemorino needs more elixir but has no money, so Belcore suggests enlisting so he'll have the money he needs. When everybody except for Nemorino finds out he is suddenly rich thanks to the death of his uncle, Nemorino attributes everybody's attention to the copious amounts of "elixir" (wine) he has been imbibing thanks to army money. Adina, enlightened by Dulcamara, realizes Nemorino's sincerity, regrets teasing him, and falls for him. Nemorino alone, pensive, reflects on a tear he saw in Adina's eye when he was ignoring her earlier, which convinces him that Adina loves him. Adina arrives and tells Nemorino he is loved and she has bought his military contract. However she turns to leave and Nemorino then laments that if he is not loved, if the elixir has not worked, and the Doctor has fooled him, then he might as well go off and die a soldier and return the contract. Adina stops him and confesses that she loves him. Nemorino is ecstatic. Belcore returns, seeing the two in an embrace. Adina explains that she loves Nemorino. The Sergeant tosses it off, noting that there are plenty of other women in the world. Dulcamara, his bags packed, adds that he will happily provide elixir for the Sergeant's next conquest. A crowd has gathered by now, all agreeing that the elixir has done its job as they bid a fond farewell to the doctor.

Notable musical numbers



Act I

- Adina “Della crudele Isotta” (Waltz then Mazurka)
- Dulcamara, cavatina di sortita, “Udite, udite o rustici” (one of the great *buffo* arias, torrent of patter set to a series of unctuous melodies for this irresistible fraud, trumpet call)
- Dulcamara-Nemorino, cavatina/cabaletta “Voglio dire/Va mortale” (Rossinian patter of Dulcamara vs. lyricism of Nemorino)
- Nemorino “Ai perigli della guerra” (lyrical Nemorino against Belcore’s patter, mock military)
- Adina-Nemorino “Lallaralala” (hilarious bickering, he is drunk, she wonders: quite irresistible. Two parallel stanzas)

Notable musical numbers 2

- finale I “Credimi Adina” (Nemorino passionately lyrical, Belcore comic and menacing, muttering, Adina sweet, responds with Nemorino’s melody)



Act 2

- Dulcamara-Adina barcarola, “Io son ricco” (musical joke: not in 6/8 but in 2/4, returns at the end of the opera)
- Nemorino-Belcore “Venti scudi” (great contrast between Nemorino’s lyrical line and Belcore’s patter)
- Nemorino romanza “Una furtiva lagrima” (added at Donizetti’s request against wishes of librettist. B flat minor, 2 stanzas, solo bassoon, turns to D flat major when he realizes he is loved)
- Nemorino-Adina “Ebben tenete poiché non sono amato/ Sappilo alfin” (stormy declaration of love)