

## ***DON PASQUALE***

### COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

#### **GAETANO DONIZETTI, *Composer***



**Gaetano Donizetti** (composer/librettist), (November 29, 1719 – April 8, 1848)

With nearly 70 operas to his credit, **Gaetano Donizetti** was a leading Italian composer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in the northern Italian city of Bergamo in 1797 to a poor family. After showing some musical talent, he was enrolled in the town's music school where he received free lessons.

Donizetti continued his education at the Philharmonic Academy in Bologna. He received his first commission in 1818 from the Teatro San Luce in Venice. Soon he moved to Rome, where in 1822 he would have his first major success, *Zoraide di Grenata*. His career was just getting started.

Later that year Donizetti settled in Naples and used it as a base from the next 16 years. He was able to work at the increasingly rapid pace demanded by the Italian theater industry and produced three to four operas a year for most of his life. In fact, he wrote *The Elixir of Love* in just eight days! During this period Donizetti successfully wrote both comic and tragic operas such as *The Daughter of the Regiment* (1840) and *Lucia de Lammermoor* (1835).

Donizetti's success in dealing with both comic and tragic settings was due in part to his own manic-depressive personality. Well-acquainted with personal misfortune, he lost in the span of eight years his mother, his father, two infant sons, an infant daughter and Virginia Vasselli, his wife of seven years. The composer never truly recuperated after her death, refusing to utter her name ever again.

After a brief stay in Paris, Donizetti turned toward the Austrian state, where he became music director of the imperial theaters. After the success of his opera *Linda of Chamounix* (1842), he was appointed Composer to the Austrian Court, a position Mozart had held a half century before.

By 1845, symptoms of a lifelong illness had become incapacitating, and Donizetti was no longer able to compose. He returned to his hometown of Bergamo where he died on April 1848.

Adapted from [www.operaamerica.org](http://www.operaamerica.org)

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### **PRODUCTION TEAM BIOGRAPHY**

#### **DAN DOONER, *Associate Director***



**Dan Dooner** (Associate Director) Born in Ottawa, Canada, Daniel Dooner studied English and drama at the universities of Toronto and London. He is a staff director at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and has worked extensively in Britain and Europe. He has directed major revivals at Covent Garden (*Rigoletto*, *Così fan tutte*, *La Traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Don Pasquale*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Fidelio*), La Scala (*Lohengrin*), Glyndebourne (*Owen Wingrave*, *Kát'a Kabanová*, *The Makropulos Case*, *Jenůfa*, *Tristan und Isolde*), English National Opera (*Parsifal*) and the Canadian Opera Company (*Così fan tutte*). In July 2011 he co-directed Nikolaus Lehnhoff's production

of *Elektra* at the Salzburg Festival.

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#### **GIUSEPPE FINZI, *Conductor***



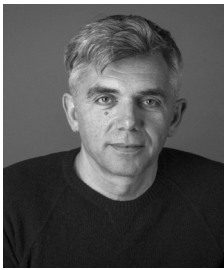
**Giuseppe Finzi** (Conductor) Former San Francisco Opera Resident Conductor Giuseppe Finzi made his Company debut in 2008 conducting *The Elixir of Love for Families*, and he returned to lead performances of *La Bohème*, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, *Faust*, *La Fanciulla del West*, *Aida*, *Turandot*, *Carmen*, *Rigoletto*, *Tosca*, and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, as well as the Company's performances at the 2009 and 2011 Stern Grove Festivals. He has also conducted *Carmen for Families*, *The Barber of Seville for Families*, and the 2011 and 2012 Adler Fellows gala concerts. Finzi previously served as assistant conductor, coach, and pianist at Milan's Teatro alla Scala. He made his conducting debut in 2003 with *Tosca* at the Teatro Rendano in Cosenza and returned in 2004 for *La Traviata*. Finzi has since led productions of *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and *Così*

*fan tutte* as well as concerts in Italy, elsewhere in Europe, and Asia. Most recently he made his debut in Germany conducting *Carmen* at Deutsche Oper Berlin. Actively involved in the community, Finzi led a master class with the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and conducted their spring production of *Così fan tutte* in 2012. Recent and upcoming engagements include *Nutcracker* and *L'Elisir d'Amore* at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, new productions of *Rigoletto* at Palermo's Teatro Massimo *Idomeneo* at the Theater Lübeck in Germany, a return to Berlin for *Carmen*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at Barcelona's Gran Teatre del Liceu, *Madama Butterfly* in Bari, *Carmen* in Menorca, and *Turandot* at the Bregenz Festival.

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#### **LAURENT PELLY, *Director***



**Laurent Pelly** (Director) Laurent Pelly is one of France's most sought-after directors of both theater and opera. His debut at San Francisco Opera was in 2009 with his highly acclaimed production of *La Fille du Régiment* (co-produced with the Vienna State Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden). New opera productions in 2015-16 included Offenbach's *Le Roi Carotte* (Opéra de Lyon,) Gounod's *Le médecin malgré lui* (Grand Théâtre de Genève) and Berlioz's *Béatrice et Bénédict* (Glyndebourne Festival), in celebration of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. Recent work includes Chabrier's *L'étoile*, Prokofiev's *Love for Three Oranges* (De Nationale Opera), *Don Pasquale* (Santa Fe Opera, San Francisco Opera, Gran Teatre del Liceu) and Rossini's *Le Comte Ory* (Opéra de Lyon, Teatro alla Scala, Milan). Other recent titles include Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and *L'heure espagnole* for the Glyndebourne and Saito Kinen Festivals – winner of the 2014 Best Opera Recording Gramophone Award. This double bill can also be seen at Teatro alla Scala Milan during the 2015-16 season, which also sees revivals of his hugely-successful productions of *Platée* and *L'elisir d'amore* (Opéra National de Paris).

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#### **IAN ROBERTSON, *Chorus Director***



**Ian Robertson** has been chorus director and conductor with San Francisco Opera since 1987, having prepared more than 300 productions for the Company. He was awarded the Olivier Messiaen Foundation Prize in 2003 for his artistic contribution to the preparation of the Company's North American premiere of *Saint François d'Assise*. Robertson made his San Francisco Opera conducting debut with *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* and has since led performances of *Falstaff*, *Lohengrin*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Don Carlo*, *Turandot*, *Il Trovatore*, and *La Bohème*. He has led the San Francisco Opera Orchestra and Chorus in many concerts, including the Company's recent Stern Grove appearance, and he has conducted *Così fan tutte* and *La Périochole* for San Francisco Opera Center and frequently led Merola Opera Program's Grand Finale concerts. Other North American opera credits include productions with Sarasota Opera, Edmonton Opera, and Philadelphia's Curtis Opera Theatre. Before joining San Francisco Opera, Robertson was head of music and chorus director of Scottish Opera, where he led numerous productions, including *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *The Pearl Fishers*, *The Secret of Susanna*, and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. The Scotland native trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and the University of Glasgow; he studied conducting under Sir Alexander Gibson. Robertson is currently the artistic director of the San Francisco Festival Chorale, which performed this summer at the Grand Teton Music Festival, and the San Francisco Boys Chorus. A 2009 trip with the San Francisco Boys Chorus took him to the inauguration of the President of the United States, and this summer he led performances with the Boys Chorus in St. Petersburg, Russia and Copenhagen.

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#### **GIOVANNI RUFFINI, *Librettist***



**Giovanni Ruffini** (Librettist) (1807, Genoa – 1881) was an Italian poet of the early 19th century. He is chiefly known for having written the draft of the libretto of the opera *Don Pasquale* for its composer Gaetano Donizetti.

Ruffini had been condemned to death as an enemy of the state and was living in exile in Paris in 1842 when it was suggested to him by Jules Janin (newly appointed director of Théâtre-Italien) that he might offer his services to Donizetti as a librettist. Donizetti told him exactly what he required for his latest opera project, *Don Pasquale*, but not that he intended to re-use music already written for other purposes. Ruffini duly wrote the draft libretto from the original text dating back to 1810, but Donizetti changed so much of Ruffini's version that librettist became angry and refused to allow his name to be mentioned in the program for the première at the Théâtre Italien in Paris on January 3, 1843.

Although Ruffini refused acknowledgement of his work for the libretto, Donizetti paid him 500 francs, which was competitive for both the length and the genre at the time. Ruffini also reportedly enjoyed working with Donizetti in the early stages of their collaboration, though he wrote to family and friends that the composer continually pressed him to work faster.

Source: *Wikipedia*



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### **PRODUCTION TEAM BIOGRAPHY**

#### **DUANE SCHULER, *Lighting Designer***



**Duane Schuler** (Lighting Designer) has achieved national and international acclaim as a theatrical lighting designer for such organizations as New York Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, De Nederlandse Opera, Opera National de Lyon, San Francisco Opera, Salzburg Festival, La Scala and American Ballet Theatre. His extensive and ongoing work as a theatrical lighting designer informs his approach to architectural lighting design.

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#### **CHANTAL THOMAS, *Set Designer***



**Chantal Thomas** (Set Designer) French designer Chantal Thomas made her San Francisco Opera debut in 2013 with *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, directed by Laurent Pelly. Previously, she made her Royal Opera debut in 2007 on *La Fille du Régiment*, directed by Pelly. She has since returned to London to create set designs for *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Manon*, and *Robert le Diable*, all directed by Pelly.

Thomas studied at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Art in Dijon and the École des Arts Décoratifs, Paris. She has worked regularly with Pelly since 1988 on more than fifty productions, their credits together including *Le Roi carotte* (Opéra de Lyon); *I Puritani*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Platée*, and *Giulio Cesare* (Paris Opéra); *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* and *La Belle Hélène* (Théâtre du Châtelet); *Don Pasquale* (Santa Fe Opera); *L'Etoile* and *The Love for Three Oranges* (Dutch National Opera); *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* (Barcelona and San Francisco); *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Theater an der Wien); and *La Traviata* (Santa Fe and Turin). Many of the productions she has worked on for Pelly have been performed by leading opera companies worldwide, including the Liceu, Barcelona, Metropolitan Opera, New York, La Scala, Milan, and Vienna State Opera.

Thomas has also worked in theater with directors including Frédéric Béliet-Garcia, Denise Chalem, Michel Rostain, and Laura Scozzi, and designed *Le Nozze di Figaro* for the Aix-en-Provence Festival, directed by Richard Brunel.