



Gaetano Donizetti

Domenico Gaetano Maria Donizetti was born November 29, 1797 in Bergamo, Italy. He was born in a windowless cellar into a poor family of a government clerk. At the age of 9 he became a protégé of Johann Simon Mayr, Maestro di Cappella of the Lombard city. Johann Mayr hosted and educated young Donizetti, and later sent the talented boy to study music under the renowned Padre Stanislao Mattei, the head master of the Music School in Bologna. After graduation he enlisted in the Army, and avoided going back to poor life in Bergamo.



In 1818 Donizetti's first operas were performed in Venice with modest success. In 1822 Donizetti settled in Naples and there had his first big success with two operas: "*Zoraida di Granada*" (1822) and "*La zingara*" (1822). He was developing the Bel canto style, writing his hallmark melody lines in a perfect match to Italian lyrics. Donizetti played with variety of genre from the comedy "*L'ajo nell'umbarazzo*" (1824), to the heroic neo-classical drama "*L'esule di Roma*" (1828), to the romantic melodrama "*Il Paria*" (1829).

Donizetti became famous beyond Italy with his opera "*Anna Bolena*" (1830). The superb quality of his music made him the rival of Vincenzo Bellini and Gioachino Rossini. Donizetti's next operas "*L'elisir d'amore*" (1832), "*Parisina*" (1833), "*Lucrezia Borgia*" (1833), and "*Maria Stuarda*" (1834) were performed in Rome, Genoa, Florence, and Teatro alla Scala in Milano. Meanwhile he had a teaching position at the Naples Conservatoire and had a good reputation for his warmth, generosity and devotion to his work.

His opera "*Lucia di Lammermoor*" (1835) straddled the annals of the day more brilliantly than any other opera. Donizetti went to Paris, and soon after was given the position of the Court Composer in Vienna. His later operas were written to French texts, with the inevitable loss of Bel canto smoothness, which was best in his melodies written to Italian lyrics. His last works of "grand-opera" scale integrated ballet numbers in spectacular settings. "*Don Pasquale*" (1843) was Donizetti's last opera. He died of paralysis on April 8, 1848, in Bergamo, Italy.

Vocally challenging "*L'elisir d'amore*" (The Elixir of Love 1832) remains a perennial favorite of the Bel canto opera repertoire worldwide. It is a story of a young love-struck Nemorino, who bought a bottle of magic drink from a traveling drug-pusher, who claims it to be a 'love potion'. Nemorino is trying to win the heart of the coquettish Adina, who eventually discovers that Nemorino's love is true and sincere. It was made into the eponymous film in 1992, starring Luciano Pavarotti as Nemorino and Kathleen Battle as Adina.

"*Una furtiva lagrima*" from the opera "*L'elixir d'amore*" is among the most famous tenor arias. It's legendary 1904 Victor recording by Enrico Caruso was used in 'Match point' (2005), 'Neokonchennaya pyesa dlya mekhanicheskogo pianino' (1977), and many other films, often uncredited.