

# VICTORIAN OPERA



## La Cenerentola

### Education Resource





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## About the work

### Synopsis

#### Act I

Angelica, known as Cenerentola (Cinderella) by her family, is waiting on her two spoiled stepsisters, Clorinda and Tisbe, while singing a song about a king who chooses a poor girl for his bride. Alidoro, Prince Ramiro's tutor, arrives dressed as a beggar. While Clorinda and Tisbe tell him to go away, Cenerentola insists that he sit down and have some food; her generosity does not go unnoticed by him.

Soon after, the prince's courtiers enter and announce that Prince Ramiro, who is in search of a wife, will shortly arrive to take the daughters of Don Magnifico to his palace for a ball. Clorinda and Tisbe, excited by the prospect of being the prince's bride, begin to prepare for the evening and order Cenerentola around. Don Magnifico realises that a potential marriage to a Prince will restore his family's fortune and hopes that one of his daughters is chosen.

They all leave and Cenerentola continues her chores about the house. Prince Ramiro enters but he has disguised himself as a valet, as he is hoping to find a wife who will love him for himself rather than his social status. Cenerentola enters the room and is startled to find him there, but the two instantly fall in love. He asks her who she is but she struggles to explain and runs out of the room.

Dandini, the prince's valet but disguised as the Prince, arrives at Don Magnifico's home and invites them all to a ball at his palace that evening. Cenerentola pleads with her father to let her go but he refuses her permission. Ramiro sees how poorly they treat Cenerentola and Alidoro states that there should be a third daughter in the house but Don Magnifico says she has died. Everyone but Cenerentola and Alidoro depart, and when they are alone he promises to take her to the ball saying her kindness and generosity will be rewarded.

Back at the palace, everyone is persuading Dandini to choose a bride. Clorinda and Tisbe are fawning over him and Dandini manages to escape to another room where Prince Ramiro is waiting for him. He tells Ramiro that they are truly dreadful which confuses them both as Alidoro has spoken highly of one of Don Magnifico's daughters. When Dandini tells the stepsisters that the one he does not marry shall be offered to his servant, the sisters are outraged.

Alidoro arrives with a beautiful lady who no one knows but Clorinda, Tisbe and Don Magnifico think she resembles Cenerentola. Despite the confusion, they all sit down to supper.

#### Act II

The arrival of the mysterious lady has worried Don Magnifico and he is concerned that her appearance will ruin his daughters' chance at marrying the Prince. Meanwhile, Dandini, who has taken a liking to Cenerentola himself, tries to impress her and to dissuade his advances, she tells him that she is in love with his servant. Ramiro, who was hidden and listening on, is overjoyed and steps forward. Cenerentola tells him that if he truly loves her, he will come to find her and asks him not to follow as she leaves to go home.

Magnifico confronts Dandini, who he still believes to be the real prince, and demands to know which of his daughters Dandini will marry. Dandini reveals that he is not the real prince and Don Magnifico is furious. He, Clorinda and Tisbe return home and order Cenerentola, by now back in her usual attire, to prepare some food.

A storm begins to develop and Alidoro takes advantage of it to organise for Prince Ramiro's carriage to break down in front of Don Magnifico's mansion so that he is forced to ask for refuge. His plan is a success as Cenerentola and Ramiro come face to face and recognise each other instantly. She learns that he is not a valet but actually Prince Ramiro. Ramiro threatens Don Magnifico but Cenerentola instead asks him to forgive them. He relents and they all celebrate the wedding between Cenerentola and Prince Ramiro.



## Creative Team

Composer     Gioachino Rossini  
Librettist     Jacopo Ferretti

Conductor     Richard Mills  
Director     Elizabeth Hill-Cooper

## Characters, cast and voice types



**Margarita Gritskova**  
Angelina  
Mezzo Soprano



**Mert Süngü**  
Prince Ramiro  
Tenor



**Stephen Marsh**  
Dandini  
Baritone



**Teddy Tahu Rhodes**  
Don Magnifico  
Bass



**Rebecca Rashleigh**  
Clorinda  
Soprano



**Shakira Dugan**  
Tisbe  
Mezzo Soprano



**Michael Lampard**  
Alidoro  
Bass



**Michael Dimovski**  
Chorus  
Tenor



**Timothy Reynolds**  
Chorus  
Tenor



**Paul Biencourt**  
Chorus  
Tenor



**Paul Batey**  
Chorus  
Tenor



**Alex Pokryshevsky**  
Baritone/Bass  
Chorus



**Kiran Rajasingam**  
Baritone/Bass  
Chorus



**Eamon Dooley**  
Baritone/Bass  
Chorus



**Nicholas Cowall**  
Baritone/Bass  
Chorus

## About the composer – Gioachino Rossini

Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868) is considered one of the most popular, successful and influential opera composers of the first half of the nineteenth century. During his career, he composed forty operas and was central to the development of opera as an art form.

Rossini was born to a horn player and singer and by the age of fourteen, could play the violin, cello, harpsichord and horn. He had also composed a number of short songs by this age and was commissioned to compose his first opera when he was fifteen.

He first achieved fame at the age of twenty while in Venice with his operas *L'inganno felice* (*The Happy Deception*, 1812) and *La pietra del paragone* (*The Touchstone*, 1812), written in the opera buffa (comic opera) style. The graceful melodies, amusing characters and ingenious plots of these works appealed to the opera-going audiences of the day. Shortly after, his fame spread to Naples, where the impresario Domenico Barbaia, offered him a six-year contract as the music director of both the Teatro San Carlo and the Teatro del Fondo. During this time, he was to compose some of his most well-regarded operas, including, *Elisabetta, regina d'Inghilterra* (1815; *Elizabeth, Queen of England*), *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1816; *The Barber of Seville*), *Otello* (1816), *La cenerentola* (1817; *Cinderella*) and *La donna del lago* (1819; *The Lady of the Lake*).

When he was thirty-one, he took up a post as the director of the Théâtre Italien in Paris. During his time there, he started work on modifying his compositional style by replacing the use of coloratura with a more declamatory style of singing. He also reformed the role of the orchestra and gave the chorus a more important position within the context of the opera. He wrote a number of significant operas while in this role, some of which include, *Le Comte Ory* (1828; *Count Ory*), and *Guillaume Tell* (1830; *William Tell*). *William Tell* was received with a standing ovation by its premiering audience and also received praise from all critics at the time. It was the last opera that Rossini would compose.

Rossini decided to retire early, at the age of thirty-seven. During his retirement he composed little, and that which he did compose consisted of more religious pieces, as well as a few songs and pieces for piano, which were mostly unpublished. He remained in Paris for the remainder of his life, where he passed time hosting extravagant gourmet dinners for the greats of the musical and literary world of the nineteenth century.



Image 1: Portrait of Gioachino Rossini, composer (1792-1868), before 1885; by Émile Perrin.

## About *La Cenerentola*

Unlike the popular fairy tale Cinderella this work is based on, Rossini's *La Cenerentola (ossia La bontà in trionfo; Cinderella, or Goodness Triumphant)* does not feature pumpkins that turn into carriages, a midnight curfew or a lost glass slipper. Instead, Ferretti and Rossini wrote a Cinderella story that centred on human nature, employing cunning disguises and the comedic buffoon-like characters typical of the opera buffa style to appeal to Italian audiences.

After the success of *The Barber of Seville* in 1815, Rossini was engaged by the Teatro Valle in Rome to write another opera to open on St Stefano's Day (December 26) in 1816. However, the story initially chosen, *Francesca di Fiox*, was scrutinised by papal censors who required too many changes to justify staging the work. Rossini asked Ferretti to choose a new subject and after a number of different suggestions, they settled on *La Cenerentola*.

The libretto was written in three weeks and Ferretti borrowed from past libretti based on the Charles Perrault's fairy tale. Given the short time in which Rossini had to compose the music, he collaborated with the Roman musician Luca Agolini who wrote the secco recitative, Alidoro's aria, the opening chorus of the second act and Clorinda's aria. Rossini also borrowed themes from *The Barber of Seville*, specifically for Cenerentola's rondo.

*La Cenerentola* opened to audiences on January 25, 1817, approximately thirty-three days after the subject of the opera was decided on. The initial response was not as great as Rossini anticipated however it soon came to be a popular work and remains so to this day.

## Cinderella throughout history

The story of Cinderella began as a folktale and the earliest telling can be traced back to Ancient Greece with the story of *Rhodopis*. It is said that Rhodopis, whose name means 'Rosy-cheeks', was living in Egypt when an eagle snatched up one of her sandals from her maid. The eagle carried the sandal all the way to Memphis and dropped it into the lap of a King, who at the time was busy administering justice. The King was taken away by the beautiful shape of the sandal and the oddness of the situation that he sent his men to all corners of the country to search for the woman to whom it belonged. She was eventually found in Naucratis and joined the King to become his Queen.

It wasn't until 1634 that the folktale, which had taken various shapes as it was passed on from generation to generation, became a fairy tale. Giambattista Basile was the first to publish it under the title *Cenerentola*, as part of his volume of fairy tales called *Pentamerone*. However, the version that is most commonly known to English-speaking audiences is Charles Perrault's *Cendrillon* (1697) or, as it was also called, *La petite pantoufle de verre (The little glass slipper)*. Perrault was responsible for adding the character of the fairy godmother, as well as the pumpkin carriage and the glass slippers. His story not only influenced composers such as Jules Massenet and Rossini but inspired the writers at Disney to create the first animated movie in 1950.

While there have been many different versions of the story as both a folktale and fairy tale, most present the character of Cinderella as a mistreated young girl who finds love and happiness with a prince.

## What is opera?

Opera as a European art form has been in existence since the 1600s, and became especially popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Today there are many styles of opera performance, but they all have one thing in common – an opera is a play that is sung.

The predominant languages of opera are Italian, French, German and English.

The main difference between opera and music theatre is amplification: music theatre is usually amplified while opera is not. In addition, music theatre usually includes spoken dialogue as well as music and dance. Opera, on the other hand, uses recitative – a singing style designed to imitate natural speech.

## Where did opera come from?

The origin of opera can be traced back to the Ancient Greeks, who lived over 2,000 years ago. The advances in society that this sophisticated civilisation developed included the invention of a city-state (*polis*) resulting in a golden age of culture, music, art, poetry and drama, including beautiful sculpture, remarkable architecture and the creation of classical poetry such as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer. Ancient Greece had a profound influence on the discovery and advancement of science, physics, maths, astronomy and geometry, producing the influential philosophers Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Cicero, who approached the big questions of life often in a genuine scientific way, daring to question and challenge traditional conventions and prejudices of their age. The Ancient Greeks also loved the theatre, with playwrights including Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides writing enduring works that informed the future dramatic structures of playwriting.

In the following thousand years, much of the knowledge and skills established by the Ancient Greeks were lost, particularly in the sciences and arts. For example, the art in what we refer to the Middle Ages had lost some of the scientific application that had made Greek art and sculpture so lifelike. From about the 1300s, Italian scholars set out to rediscover many of the Ancient Greeks' innovations. This period was called the Renaissance, which translates literally as 'rebirth'. Founded in Florence, it marked a period of enlightenment and the rediscovery and study of culture, philosophy, art, architecture and science. During this era, highly influential artists contributed a vast wealth of knowledge. Some of which include musicians, philosophers, writers and mathematicians such as Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Botticelli, Raphael, Donatello, Galileo, Shakespeare, Erasmus and Copernicus. One art form the Renaissance scholars were particularly interested in was Greek theatre. The texts had survived time, but the performance practice indications had been lost. Scholars knew from writings by philosophers such as Aristotle and Plato that the plays were accompanied by music, and that this helped raise the emotional impact of the works. But how? What did the music do? How were the lines sung?

The Florentine Camerata, a group of thinkers and musicians from Florence, met regularly to determine how the musical accompaniment might have sounded and supported the text. They invented a new art form in which the dialogue in a play would be sung. They decided to call the new art form 'opera', which simply meant 'a work'. The first truly successful opera was called *L'Orfeo*. It was composed by Claudio Monteverdi and is still performed today.

Following the great success of this work, opera became popular all over Europe and then the world. The style of opera, and the way it was performed, developed over the centuries to reflect the culture of the time. At its height in the 1800s, opera was performed regularly in theatres in every major city.



## Voice types and singing styles

There are seven voice types in opera, each of which is defined by the range of notes they can sing and their vocal quality.

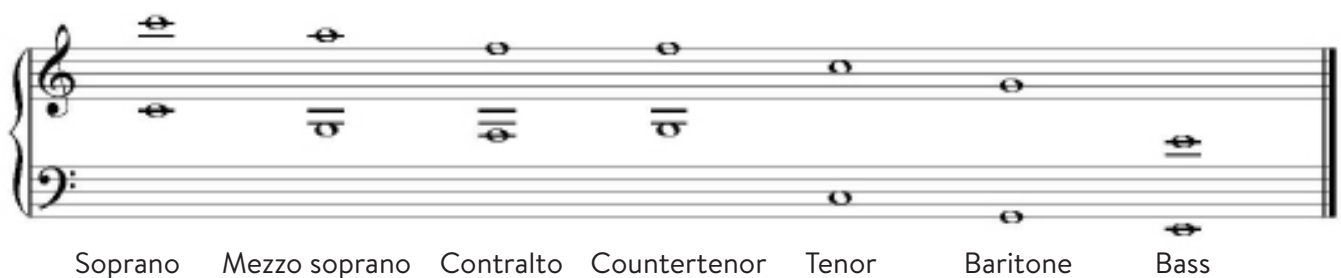
There are three female operatic voice types, although most operas only have soprano and mezzo-soprano roles.

- Soprano – the highest sounding female voice, with a vocal range from middle C up to the C two octaves above.
- Mezzo soprano – slightly lower than the soprano, with a vocal range from the G below middle C to the A two octaves above.
- Contralto – the lowest sounding female voice and rarely used in opera today. The vocal range for this voice type is from the F below middle C to a high F one octave above.

There are four male voice types, although the countertenor voice is mainly used in operas from the Baroque period (1600-1750).

- Countertenor – the highest sounding male voice, with almost the same vocal range as a mezzo-soprano; the G below middle C to a high F one octave above.
- Tenor – a high sounding male voice, that usually takes the leading male role. The vocal range for this type is roughly from the C below middle C to the C above.
- Baritone – the middle sounding male voice with a vocal range from the second G below middle C up to the G above.
- Bass – the lowest sounding male voice, which has a vocal range from the E above middle C to the E two octaves below; however, some bass singers can sing lower.

This diagram illustrates where each voice type sits on a music stave.



There are further categories of voice, defining the kind of voice quality and the type of music they can sing. The composer will consider voice types to highlight the different characters – for example, to differentiate between a King and a Servant, or a Princess and a Witch.

A few of these are:

- Coloratura – a very high range with the ability to sing complicated parts with agility
- Dramatic – a heavy sounding, powerful voice
- Lyric – an average sized voice with the ability to sing long, beautiful phrases
- Heldentenor – the ‘heroic tenor’, a very big role that requires a powerful sound

Follow the links below to hear examples of what these voices sound like:

Classical female voices – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIPFAww8X-U>

Classical male voices – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRL7shs23Wc>



## Opera buffa

Opera buffa, also known as comic opera, is a form of opera that was popular in Europe in the early 1700s. There were many types of comic opera, some of which include French opéra comique, German singspiel, the English ballad opera and Italian opera buffa. Whereas opera seria, or serious opera, was often set in the past, centring around mythological or ancient Greek or Roman plots, opera buffa was set in contemporary times. The characters in an opera buffa are often drawn from real life, so that audiences can recognise, relate to and laugh at these characters. Opera buffa gave composers and lower-class audiences the freedom to mock and laugh at the rich and powerful; something they could not easily do in real life without consequence.

The genre of opera buffa started out as short, one or two act performances which would occur during the interval between the acts of serious opera performances in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These performances were known as intermezzo operas and were very popular. The most famous intermezzo opera buffa was Giovanni Battista Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* (1733; *The Servant Turned Mistress*). It was so famous that it transcended its intermezzo status and was performed as a stand-alone opera. *La Serva Padrona* is an important opera in this genre, as it was not only part of bridging the gap between baroque and classical period opera, it also helped advance opera buffa as a full-length operatic style.

Rossini also played a central role in developing the opera buffa style. He started writing opera buffa as it was fashionable to do so, and he enjoyed the style. He was so good at it that the style grew in popularity, and Rossini was obligated to continue writing comic opera. Taking the existing structure of opera buffa, Rossini reformed it by embellishing the melodies with *bel canto* style, using unusual rhythms and increasing the role of the orchestra.

## Italian opera

When Rossini began his compositional career, opera in Italy was being composed in the *bel canto* style that had been slowly developing through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While there was an increase of romantic subjects being dealt with by Italian composers with plots that featured star-crossed lovers and tragic endings, the form of Italian opera remained the same. The confrontation between the hero and villain in the presence of the heroine and the chorus would signify the beginning of the climax, which would then be followed by a sad sweet song and an action filled piece to bring down the curtain.

Italian opera during this period had achieved an expressiveness and musical fluidity yet to be obtained by the French and German traditions. In addition, Italy's singers were far more accomplished than anywhere else in the world, and the librettists who wrote the operas' texts were skilled in making use of those situations that would lend themselves well to operatic treatment.

## What is bel canto?

Bel canto literally translates as “beautiful singing” in Italian. Originating as a type of solo singing in the sixteenth century, bel canto later developed as a form of operatic singing in Italian opera in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. While bel canto is mainly defined as a singing technique, it is also a type of opera, where bel canto is expressed through beautiful arias to convey the drama of the story.

As a singing technique, bel canto requires the singer to have a certain level of vocal mastery and skill. In order to sustain the often long and florid vocal passages of bel canto, the singer is required to have extreme flexibility and agility of the voice. As the style is all about beauty, arias were often written to show off the voice of the performer, particularly through long legato phrases and coloratura. Breath control is very important here, as the singer needs to feel free to sing the coloratura in the long vocal passages. The singer would then ornament their vocal lines with trills, turns and runs which add to the beauty of the melody, while also showing off their technique and vocal skills. Often the arias are also set within a large dynamic range. Although the vocal line and skill of the singer are key elements to bel canto, language and articulation are still very important and must be clear.

As the vocal line is filled with so much action which is intended to capture the attention of the audience, the orchestra is usually given simple but beautiful accompaniment to support the singer.

The most recognised composers of the bel canto style are Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini and Gioachino Rossini.

## Orchestration

The orchestration for *La Cenerentola* consists of thirty-five musicians and is made up of the instruments listed below.

| Instrumental family | Instrument                             |
|---------------------|--|
| Woodwind            | Flute<br>Oboe<br>Clarinet<br>Bassoon   |
| Brass               | French Horn<br>Trumpet<br>Trombone     |
| Strings             | Violin<br>Viola<br>Cello<br>Contrabass |



## Interview with the conductor, Richard Mills

### Can you talk a little bit about Rossini as a composer and what he brought to opera as a genre?

Rossini is unique. He was working at the apogee of the Italian opera industry when impresarios ruled the industry. In this period of *La Cenerentola* he was at Napoli, which was ruled by one of the great bullies of bel canto, Domenico Barbaia. In fact, Barbaia has a dessert named after him, the Barbajada, which is sponge cake, amaretto, cream, nuts and all the rest of it. He was a gourmet as well as an entrepreneur and he had roulette tables in the foyer at the Teatro San Carlo to finance his seasons. He had all the best singers in Italy under contract, such as Adelina Patti, Giuditta Pasta and Maria Malibran to name a few, and of course Rossini in these years at Napoli, when he churned out opera after opera.

Now, yes, to some extent the operas are formulaic, but each opera has a special colour, a *tinta* as we say in Verdi, and they build on the traditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but in a unique way so that the actual vocal art is at a very, very high level. The coloratura, the cantabile, the ornamentation, which was frequently written out by Rossini (although of course sometimes it's left to singers) and of course the dramaturgy. He had such a profound understanding of the human heart that the dramaturgy in each of his operas is really quite beautiful. The comedies are utterly delightful, and the opera seria, the grand opera like *William Tell*, *Moïse et Pharaon, ou Le passage de la Mer Rouge* (*Moses and Pharaoh, or The Crossing of the Red Sea*) and *Otello* have a great grandeur and great refinement, I would say.

The voice is the first thing: *prima la voce*, first the voice, the voice, the voice, which is so important. He wrote for these singers with huge personalities and with unique gifts. It was an art that was utterly grounded in the theatre and the practicalities of theatre. He wrote incredibly quickly, because he had to because of the demands of the impresarios. It was something like the Hollywood movie composers used to be. They had the capacity to write with immense speed and at a high quality, and that was Rossini.

He was really a humanist in that he did not rely on mythological interventions at all. Probably the most mythological person is in fact Alidoro in this opera, but he does away with the fairy godmother, for example. The operas are grounded in a very rich humanity, which of course reaches back to *commedia dell'arte* and the types of *commedia dell'arte*. I mean, in both operas you have the buffa, the pantelone figure, who is outwitted by the younger ones. But what's unique about *La Cenerentola* is that it ends with an act of forgiveness, which is quite beautiful. And I mean, the same as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*, she forgives her guardian, he recognises folly, and everybody gets on with life. But this is part of the human comedy, if you like.

### **La Cenerentola, like many of Rossini's works, is written in the opera buffa style, which you mentioned. Can you explain the structure of the style and some of the elements in both the libretto and score that make it an opera buffa?**

Well opera buffa, it's really just comic opera and its structural elements are no different to opera in general. By Rossini's time, opera seria was nearly dead. The Metastasian ideal was, you know one feeling, one aria etcetera and so on. The whole Baroque doctrine of affect, of the affections, it was sort of modified by Mozart's genius to such an extent in the later operas, like *Don Giovanni* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, the great Da Ponte operas, that opera changed again. Though in many ways, *Semiramide* is the last Baroque opera with its kind of formalities. *William Tell* is too in the way, although it's got a fluidity that Baroque opera doesn't have.

So really, there are the set numbers, arias, duets, trios, quintets and ensembles, which unfold the story rather than make it absolutely static. If you look at the quintet in *The Barber of Seville* for example, that's what it does, it has a narrative as well as a formal structure. These are juxtaposed with recitativo secco, which is simple declamation supported by harmonies. In fact, in Rossini's day, we dispensed with the cello doubling the bass of the recits and proceeded much more freely with the forte piano playing the recits and being in fact another character, another commentator on the action.

### **You mentioned there briefly a little bit about the role of the ensemble in opera. How is it utilised in La Cenerentola?**

Well of course you have the great quintet, the ugly sisters' duos, you've got the chorus, which is strategically placed in the arias, and these delineate character and carry the story forward. At the same time having lots of local colour and interest as well.



**What are the technical challenges for singers in this work?**

Well, the coloratura; the speed at which the Italian has to flow; the complexity and intricacy of the phrasing and the delicacy of the phrasing; and the sheer vocal finesse required to do a good job of it.

**What are some of the musical highlights in this score for both singers and the orchestra?**

Certainly, it's hard to sing the things out, but the Dandini arias, the great quintet in Act II, Cenerentola's concluding Rondo. There are some wonderful moments in it. Even the Clorinda-Tisbe duet, I quite like and the ensemble for the two sisters and Cenerentola; it's utterly charming. It's beautiful music and it's beautifully made music. Rossini had such a wonderful heart, he had such a generous loving understanding of the human predicament that the music is so wonderfully refreshing and healing and engaging. It's one of the great gifts to humanity.

**What do you think makes it that way? When you say it's beautifully made, how would you explain that to someone who doesn't have that knowledge of how much is written?**

Well, it's very clear and it's built very logically in its phrase lengths, in its periods, and in the way that the themes are enunciated and developed. It's very clear.

**Are there any tricky parts for you as the conductor in this score?**

Well the responsibility of course for the conductor in this repertoire is the editing, the preparation of the orchestral materials. There were certain conventions prevailing at the time of Rossini which were left over of eighteenth-century performance practice, but which are not commonly known today and which you can't necessarily rely on the orchestra feeling the same way. So you have to notate it very precisely if you want the dynamics to come away and the bar to show the phrasing. You have to write it in otherwise with the time that you have for rehearsal, the conductor would be talking for ninety per cent of it. You can't do that. You have to just notate it and the players just read it.

**That must be a bit of a process then.**

It is. It's very time consuming.

**Why hasn't a contemporary publisher taken this on and published a notated version?**

Well, the thing is that every conductor will have their own idea of the way the phrases go. I mean, the Fondazioni Rossini in Pesaro has published the collected works in beautiful clear font, but Alberto Zetta edited a lot of them, and you may not necessarily agree with some of the things that are there or maybe there are other ways of doing it.

**Why, if at all, do you think it's important to continue staging Rossini's works?**

Well for a start, they're just so enjoyable. They're so much fun! Everyone comes out with a smile on their face. That's a great gift to the human condition.

**I can see it in your eyes, how happy he makes you.**

Oh it's just wonderful. I love it! It's so full of wit, it's so full of charm, it's so full of wisdom, it's amazing! What a man! Astonishing!



## Glossary

**Act** – A component of the total work, consisting of its own partial dramatic arc.

**Appoggiatura** – A grace note which delays the next note of the melody, taking half or more of its written time value.

**Arabesque** – A posture in ballet, where one leg is extended backwards at a right angle, the torso is bent forward, and the arms are outstretched, one forwards and one backwards.

**Aria** – An elaborate composition for solo voice with instrumental accompaniment.

**Ariosso** – An aria of a lyrical and expressive quality.

**Arrangement** – In music, a reconceptualization of a previously composed work.

**Banda** – An onstage instrumental ensemble in an opera.

**Bar** – Also called a measure. The section between two bar lines containing the number of beats as indicated by the time signature.

**Baritone** – The male voice between the tenor and bass.

**Baroque period** – Spanning from 17th to mid-18th century in Europe, baroque opera is characterised by a large string section and figured bass.

**Bass** – The lowest male voice.

**Baton** – A white stick used by conductors to conduct with, allowing the conductor greater visibility.

**Beat** – The regular pulse of the music.

**Bel canto** – A singing technique in Italian meaning “beautiful singing”.

**Cantata** – A narrative piece of music for voices with instrumental accompaniment, typically with solos, chorus, and orchestra.

**Caricature** – A ludicrous take on something, usually with a satirical tone.

**Castrato** – Historically, a singer who was castrated as a boy to retain the boyish quality of the voice. The pitch of castrato singers was similar to a soprano.

**Choreographer** – The person who designs and creates the movement of the performance, usually in dance form.

**Chorus** – In opera or music theatre this refers to a large body of singers.

**Chorus master** – The person responsible for the rehearsal and preparation of the chorus prior to production.

**Classical period** – Spanning from mid-18th to mid-19th century, opera in the classical period is characterised by a lighter, clearer texture than baroque music.

**Coloratura** – A rapid passage, run, trill or other virtuoso-like feature used particularly in music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**Composer** – The person who writes the music.

**Concertmaster** – The lead violinist of the orchestra.

**Concerto** – A musical composition that features one solo instrument accompanied by an orchestra.

**Concerto grosso** – A musical composition for a group of solo instruments accompanied by an orchestra.

**Conductor** – The person who interprets and directs the orchestra or musical performance, coordinating the performers and keeping the time through the technique of hand movements.

**Contralto** – The lowest female voice.

**Countertenor** – The highest male voice.

**Crescendo** – A gradual increase in loudness.

**Designer** – The person who designs the overall look of the production, including the sets, costumes, props and lighting.

**Director** – The person who controls the artistic and dramatic aspects of the production, realising the conceptual and interpretation of the work.

**Discords** – A lack of harmony between notes, sometimes unresolved causing a work to sound unresolved and at times unpleasant.

**Dress rehearsal** – Often the final rehearsal of all the component parts of the production in full costume.

**Duet** – A composition for two performers of equal importance.

**Ensemble** – A group of people that perform together.

**Excerpt** – A short extract from a piece of music.

**Finale** – The last movement in a work of several movements.

**Grand opera** – A large-scale serious opera without spoken dialogue.

**Harmony** – The chordal structure of a musical composition in contrast to the linear structure, which supports the melody line.

**Hero / Heroine** – In its modern form, the hero/heroine is a protagonist character who fulfils a task and restores balance to the community. He/she is a born leader, whether they know it or not, as well as a real survivor who has faith in good. Others are willing to believe in this person and will follow them.

**Interlude** – A section of music between acts.

**Intermezzo** – An Italian term meaning “in the middle”. It refers to a comic operatic interlude played between the acts of an opera seria performance.

**Intermission** – A break in the performance that allows the audience to leave the auditorium.

**Key** – The tonal centre around which a composition is based, usually indicated by a key signature.

**Libretto** – The text of an opera or music theatre work.

**Madrigal** – A song of several voices arranged in elaborate counterpoint from the Renaissance period.

**Mezzo soprano** – The second highest female voice.

**Ode** – An ode is a poem that praised or glorified an event or individual.

**Opera** – A staged drama set to music, comprised of vocal pieces with instrumental accompaniment and usually with orchestral overtures and interludes.

**Opera buffa** – Also known as ‘comic opera’, an opera with a large mixture of music, on a light subject with a happy ending, including comic elements.

**Opera seria** – Also known as ‘serious opera’, an opera with dramatic, serious content often with a tragic ending.

**Operetta** – A style of opera that is light hearted, shorter, and may include spoken dialogue.

**Oratorio** – A large musical composition that uses an orchestra, choir and soloists, each of which play a character in the overall work.

**Orchestra** – A large ensemble of instruments divided into four main sections: strings, woodwind, brass and percussion.

**Orchestration** – Utilisation of the instrumentation of an orchestra in the writing of a composition.

**Overture** – An instrumental composition intended as an introduction to an opera or other music theatre work.

**Pantalone** – A comic character in Italian theatre, usually a foolish old man who was the butt of all jokes.

**Pirouette** – In ballet, the act of spinning on one foot, typically with the raised foot touching the knee of the supporting leg.

**Ponticello** – A technique that requires string musicians to play over or near the bridge of the instrument with the bow to produce a glassy sound and emphasizes the higher harmonics.

**Principal** – One of the main characters.

**Protagonist** – The main character.

**Pulse** – The underlying beat of a piece of music.

**Range** – The range from the lowest to highest notes that are played or sung.

**Recitative** – A vocal (singing) style designed to imitate the natural inflections of speech, used in opera where dialogue might be used in other forms of music theatre.

**Rehearsal** – Where the performers and the creatives develop the production, shaping lines, songs, movements etc.

**Rhythm** – The regular and irregular pattern of notes of different length in the music.



**Repetiteur** – A pianist who works as an accompanist and vocal coach for opera.

**Romantic Period** – A period in Western music that began in the early 19th century. Romantic composers sought to create music that was individualistic, emotional, dramatic and often programmatic, reflecting broader trends within the movements of Romantic literature, poetry, art and philosophy.

**Score** – The notation showing all the parts of a work, both instrumental and vocal.

**Season** – The time in which a number of performances take place for a single production.

**Solo** – A piece of music performed by a single performer either alone or with accompaniment.

**Soprano** – The highest female voice.

**Soubrette** – A light operatic soprano.

**Sound Designer** – The person who designs the additional sound used in a production.

**Stage Manager** – The person who manages the running of rehearsals and performances, managing all the components of the production during performance.

**Surtitles** – A translation of the words being sung on stage projected onto a screen above the stage.

**Synopsis** – A summary of the story.

**Tempo** – The speed of a composition.

**Tenor** – A high male voice.

**Tessitura** – The general range of vocal parts.

**Time signature** – A notation used to specify how many beats in a bar and the note value equivalent to the beat.

**Tone** – The interval of a major second or a sound of definite pitch and duration.

**Transcription** – In music, a notation of a piece of music that has not been written out.

**Tutti** – A marking in a score that indicates the use of the whole orchestra and/or all the vocal parts.

**Tremolo** – A trembling effect that involves either a rapid reiteration on a single note or between two notes, or a variation in amplitude.

**Vibrato** – A very slight fluctuation of pitch in rapid succession to create warmth in the sound.

**Villain** – Often the antagonist. In literature, this is the evil character in the story, the character who has a negative effect on the other characters.

**Vocal range** – The human voice falls into a range from the lowest to highest notes they can reach. The normal range is around two octaves and is traditionally broken into seven voice types, (from highest to lowest) soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone and bass.

**Western music** – A musical tradition derived from European cultures spanning the flourishing musical culture of ancient times to the present day.

**Workshop** – An exploration of a new work (production, text, music, design).

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## Images

1. Portrait of Gioachino Rossini, composer (1792-1868), before 1885; by Émile Perrin. Retrieved from: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gioachino\\_Rossini\\_by\\_%C3%89mile\\_Perrin\\_\(before\\_1885\)\\_-\\_Archivio\\_Storico\\_Ricordi\\_ICON010579.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gioachino_Rossini_by_%C3%89mile_Perrin_(before_1885)_-_Archivio_Storico_Ricordi_ICON010579.jpg).