

Donizetti and the world around him

What was going on during Donizetti's lifetime (1797-1848)?

Opera is a product of the time in which it was composed. Current issues and discoveries in fields like science, mathematics, theatre, art, politics and even social intrigues often found their way onto the stage, either in serious contexts or as the object of a parody. Changing musical tastes can also be evident. During most of the 18th century, "Opera Buffa" was the prevalent form of sung musical comedy. This genre reached its apex in the works of Mozart, but to tell the story of DON PASQUALE, Donizetti 'revived' an older tradition and created the last (and one of the greatest) true opera buffas. The list below contains further information about the events during Donizetti's lifetime. Use this list as a starting point to create a picture of the world during the first half of the 19th century.

World Events

- 1789 Washington is inaugurated as the first President of the United States; the Bastille is stormed in Paris, initiating the French Revolution
- 1791 The first Ten Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, The Bill of Rights, are ratified
- 1793-95 Spain wars against revolutionary France, but is defeated and forced into alliance with France
- 1800 Napoleon conquers Spain and regains Louisiana territory
- 1803 Napoleon agrees to purchase of Louisiana Territory by U.S.
- 1808 Napoleon invades Spain and names his brother Joseph Bonaparte King of Spain
- 1815 Battle of Waterloo, Napoleon is defeated
- 1818 "Savannah" becomes the first steamship to cross the Atlantic Ocean (26 days)
- 1825 First public steam railway opens in England
- 1833 Abolition of slavery in Britain
- 1845 Republic of Texas annexed by USA
- 1848 Discovery of gold in California
- 1861-65 American Civil War

Musical Events

- 1786 *The Marriage of Figaro* premieres in Vienna
- 1791 *The Magic Flute* opens, Vienna. Mozart dies three months later at age of thirty-five
- 1801 German Ludwig van Beethoven composes "Moonlight Sonata" for piano
- 1809 Prolific composer Franz Joseph Haydn dies
- 1816 The metronome, an instrument used to measure exact tempo, is invented by Mälzel in Germany
- 1822 Accordion invented in Germany
- 1827 Beethoven dies
- 1833 Composer Johannes Brahms is born in Hamburg, Germany
- 1840 Russian composer Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky is born
- 1853 William Steinway begins making pianos in New York
- 1858 Birth of Italian composer Giacomo Puccini
- 1861 G. Schirmer, the oldest major American music publishing firm, is established in New York
- 1867 Johann Strauss the Younger composes the famous waltz, "The Blue Danube"