

Donizetti, *Sinfonia from Don Pasquale; Excerpts from Lucia di Lammermoor*

ABOUT THE COMPOSER: Gaetano Donizetti was born in 1797 to a non-musical family, but showed exceptional promise in music from a young age. A prolific composer, Donizetti is best remembered for his operas written in the *bel canto* style. *Don Pasquale* and *Lucia di Lammermoor* are among his most beloved works.

Don Pasquale Sinfonia (1843)

Don Pasquale is a comic opera, a story of love and deception. Wealthy bachelor Don Pasquale seeks to arrange a financially viable marriage for his nephew Enrico. However, Enrico is in love with Norina, a poor widow. The two lovers hatch an elaborate scheme to force Don Pasquale to bless their marriage.

This *sinfonia* is in the typical lighthearted style of comic operas. It begins softly, but the opening theme is quickly overtaken by a lively new melody in the strings. This gives way to percussion and brass, which set the scene for a party. Brief stormy interludes punctuate the return of the introductory material. The overture concludes with a section of bright fanfare.

Excerpts from Lucia di Lammermoor (1835)

Lucia di Lammermoor is a tragic opera loosely based upon Sir Walter Scott's historical novel *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Set in the hills of Scotland near the end of the 17th century, it tells the story of the fragile Lucia.

Synopsis

Lucia has pledged her eternal love to Edgardo. Tragically, he is her brother's sworn enemy. When Lucia's brother Enrico learns of their love affair, he forces her into a marriage that will politically benefit their family. After the wedding ceremony, Lucia descends into madness and kills her new husband. She fantasizes about a wedding night with her lover Edgardo, but begins losing her senses and pleads for him to join her on her deathbed. By the time Edgardo hears the news, it is too late; Lucia has already died. He ends his own life in despair, with hopes of joining Lucia in heaven.

Sulla tomba che rinserra (Act I Finale) - Lucia, Edgardo

In this duet, Lucia and Edgardo meet in secret to bid farewell one another before Edgardo's departure to France. The two exchange rings and pledge their eternal love.

Mad Scene (Act III) - Lucia

In the famous Mad Scene, Lucia enters covered in blood and lost in a rapturous trance. She believes she and Edgardo have just married. Famously difficult to perform, this scene demands a soprano with great vocal agility who can execute florid ornamentation in their highest register.

Tu che a Dio spiegasti l'ali (Act III, Finale) - Edgardo

After receiving news of Lucia's death, Edgardo decides to take his own life. He sings of Lucia, "o bell'alma innamorata" (o beautiful, beloved soul), before drawing his dagger.