

May 21, 2020 – Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*

On this week's WCPE Opera House we'll dip into the AI Ruocchio Archives for an encore performance of Gaetano Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. The opera, in the tradition of *opera buffa*, harkens back to the stock characters of the *commedia dell'arte*. Pasquale is recognizable as the blustery Pantalone, Ernesto as the lovesick Pierrot, Malatesta as the scheming Scapino, and Norina as a wily Columbina. *Don Pasquale* was first produced on January 3, 1843, at the Théâtre Italien in Paris.

The story takes place in 19th-century Rome, where the wealthy, elderly bachelor Don Pasquale (bass-baritone **Sesto Bruscantini**) has decided to marry so as to disinherit his nephew Ernesto (tenor **Gösta Windbergh**), who refuses to marry the woman his uncle has chosen for him because he's in love with the flighty widow Norina (soprano **Mirella Freni**). The family physician, Dr. Malatesta (baritone **Leo Nucci**), aids the young lovers: he arranges a mock wedding between Pasquale and Norina, the latter disguised as Malatesta's demure sister "Sofronia," a convent girl. No sooner has the ceremony taken place than "Sofronia" begins to make Pasquale's life such a misery that he is quickly put off by the whole idea of marriage. To get rid of "Sofronia," Pasquale readily agrees to Malatesta's suggestion that he allow Ernesto and Norina to marry!

Riccardo Muti conducts the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Ambrosian Opera Chorus in this 1982 EMI/Angel recording.

From a 1982 Budapest performance, **Magda Kalmár** (Norina) and **János Bándi** (Ernesto) sing the Act III duet "Tornami a dir": <http://youtu.be/l7dNGDnoaws>.

Next Thursday, May 28th, please join me for Kurt Weill's "American opera" *Street Scene*, which takes the inhabitants of a crowded New York City tenement building during an oppressively hot summer day and lets us see them as individuals. It features **Jerry Hadley**, **Angelina Réaux**, **Samuel Ramey** and **Josephine Barstow**. **John Mauceri** conducts this 1991 recording.

The WCPE Opera House is heard every Thursday evening at 7 o'clock in the Eastern time zone on 89.7 FM in central North Carolina. We're streamed online world-wide at <http://www.theclassicalstation.org>, and you can listen on WCPE's Android or iPhone apps.

Bob Chapman

W. Robert Chapman, Host of the WCPE Opera House