

# The Maestro

*Magichour productions are staging a series of performances of a new play about the life and times of Donizetti; at the 2022 Brighton Festival and other locations across the summer*

The play includes live performances of arias by Donizetti, performed by Sussex-based soprano Karen Orchin under the musical direction of Simon Gray who has wide experience of conducting opera. Donizetti is played by professional actor Robert Tremayne and the play also features Sophie Methuen Turner.

The play looks back from Donizetti's tragic final year to his youth in Bergamo and his marriage to Virginia, charting his triumphs and comic genius as well as the challenges and hardships, which are reflected in his music. A series of scenes reveals key elements of his life and times, and explores some of the tensions, as well as some of his happiest and most productive years. The play aims to reveal Donizetti's fascinating life story and the way that his life and times interacted with his music.

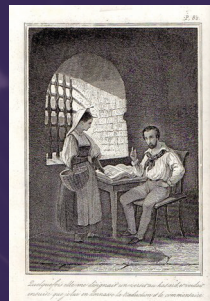


## *How did this play come about?*

Its two authors, who have worked closely together in the past arrived at the idea of dramatising elements of Donizetti's life from different directions during lockdown.

Duncan Hopper is a playwright who has specialised in dramas focused on real lives. His play *Helen's Shadow* features Heinrich Schliemann the archaeologist and excavator of Troy. The one woman play *An Evening with Lady Montague* explores the life and letters of Lady Wortley Montague.

A musical treatment of the life of Marilyn Monroe, *Whatever Happened to Marilyn* offers the tantalising theory that this iconic figure did not take her own life but was spirited away by a powerful America political family and lived to a ripe old age. Duncan has personal links with Bergamo and Donizetti was a natural subject for another historical and musical study.



Duncan's collaborator Mike Wells came from a rather different direction. An opera lover since seeing a memorable production of *Tosca* at Covent Garden when he was sixteen, Mike was intrigued by the Bergamo connection. He directed *The Elixir of Love* for a Berkshire opera company in 1976 which was, for him, one of the most memorable productions in a directing career which has included over 200 plays, operas and musicals.

Conversations during lockdown between Mike and Duncan about Bergamo, Donizetti, new works for Magichour to produce, a possible biography of the composer were the genesis for *The Maestro*.

We hope that in our modest way we can help to show how interesting the career and works of Donizetti are to a wider theatre going public. Our professional actors, never having listened to any music of this period or genre, have been moved and fascinated by the music we have chosen – not all of it familiar. The authors are still pursuing their knowledge of the Maestro's works.

## *Where can it be seen?*

Performances will take place in some stunning venues. The beautiful church of St George's in Kemptown is one of Brighton's architectural gems and close to some of the finest Georgian buildings in Britain. Newtimber Church nestles amongst the fine scenery of the South Downs close to the main London to Brighton road. Danny House in Hurstpierpoint is a most beautiful Elizabethan mansion and its music room is a stage in itself. A picnic in the grounds would add to the pleasure of



a visit. And after that we hope to stage *The Maestro* in some other places of historical interest and take advantage of the beauties that Sussex has to offer.



For more information please visit:  
[www.maestromagichour.com](http://www.maestromagichour.com)