

## 10 things to Know about Donizetti

### 1. GAETANO WASN'T HIS FIRST NAME

Donizetti was born as Domenico Gaetano Maria Donizetti in Bergamo (Lombardy, Italy).

### 2. CAME FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Donizetti grew up in a poor family with no musical background.

### 3. MUCH TRAGEDY IN HIS LIFE

Donizetti had a very sad life. His wife died from cholera after only 10 years of marriage and his three children all died very young in epidemics and tragedies from which they say he never recovered.

### 4. EVEN MORE TRAGEDY AND A SAD ENDING

By the age of 45, Donizetti was suffering from symptoms of syphilis and bipolar disorder and just three years later, he suffered a stroke, paralysis, and dementia, and was committed to an asylum in Paris. He returned home to Bergamo at the age of 50 where he soon died.

### 5. FIRST TEACHER WAS HIS SAVING GRACE

Donizetti owed a great deal to his first teacher and mentor Giovanni Simone Mayr, a Bavarian opera composer, director of Bergamo's *maestro di cappella* and founder of the 'Charitable Music School' which Donizetti was able to take advantage of thanks to a scholarship.

### 6. TALENT EARNED HIM A DISCHARGE FROM THE ARMY

After Donizetti completed his education, he joined the army and was posted to Venice. While there, his first opera to be staged was *Enrico Comte di Borgogna*. His next opera, *Zoraida de Granata*, was so successful that he obtained a discharge from the army in order to be able to concentrate on composing.

### 7. A MASTER OF BEL CANTO

Donizetti's style was early Italian romantic. He, together with Rossini and Bellini, were the masters of the Italian opera style known as 'bel canto.'

### 8. SPEEDY GONZALES

Donizetti was an incredibly fast worker; it is said that he could produce a three-act opera (music and words) in just 10 days.



## **9. A PROLIFIC COMPOSER**

Donizetti wrote 75 operas, 16 symphonies, 19 string quartets, 193 songs, many other vocal works, and many instrumental works including concertos, quartets, sonatas, and chamber music. And he died before the age of 50!

## **10. DON PASQUALE AMONG HIS BEST-KNOWN WORKS**

Donizetti's best known works are *Lucia di Lammmoor*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *La Fille du Regiment*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Poliuto*, and *Don Pasquale*.

"My heyday is over, and another must take my place. The world wants something new. Others have ceded their places to us and we must cede ours to still others... I am more than happy to give mine to people of talent like Verdi." – Gaetano Donizetti

**Sources:** [www.52composer.ca](http://www.52composer.ca)