

**KENTUCKY OPERA**

Proudly  
Presents

*The Elixir of Love (L'Elisir d'Amore)*

by

*Gaetano Donizetti*

*Featuring*

*Nemorino, a peasant in love with Adina . . .*

*Tenor*

*Adina, a wealthy landowner . . . . . Soprano*

*Belcore, a sergeant . . . . . Baritone*

*Dr. Dulcamara, a medicine man . . . . . Bass*

*Giannetta, a peasant girl . . . . . Soprano*

*Peasants and soldiers of Belcore's platoon*

# The Elixir of Love—the synopsis

This opera was composed in a six week period between March 13, 1832 and its premiere on May 1, 1832. It was hugely successful across Italy and became one of the most performed operas between 1838 and 1848. The tenor aria *Una furtive lagrima* has become a standard in the tenor repertoire with singers like Caruso and Pavarotti making it a classic.

## Act I Scene 1 – The entrance to Adina’s farm

Nemorino is watching the beautiful Adina reading a book (*Quanto e bella*). She laughs at the story that turns out to be the story of Tristan and Isolde. The rest of the peasants gather around her and she declares that she wishes she had a magic potion (*Della crudele Isotta*). Sergeant Belcore and his platoon arrive. He presents flowers to Adina. He compares himself to the character of Paris who awards the golden apple to Aphrodite. He is hoping for a response from Adina (*Come Paride vezzoso*). Nemorino is upset with the Sergeant’s attentions to Adina. Adina says that she’s in no hurry to make up her mind. Belcore tells her that time flies and Adina states that some soldiers claim victory before the battle has even started.

Nemorino wants to tell Adina about his feelings for her. When they are finally alone, Nemorino tries but Adina gets tired of hearing him sigh. She tells him to go take care of his sick uncle. Nemorino tells her that his love has made him not care about his uncle dying and perhaps leaving his money to another heir. Adina tells Nemorino that while he is nice, she feels nothing for him (*Chiedi all’aura lusinghiera*). He says he cannot leave her. She laughs at him.

## Scene 2 – The village square

The villagers gather to greet Dr. Dulcamara as he arrives in his outrageous carriage. Dulcamara is the traveling medicine man/fraud who promises that he can cure anything (*Udite, udite, o rustici*). Nemorino asks Dulcamara if he sells a love elixir. Dulcamara has what Nemorino wants and while Nemorino thanks him, Dulcamara comments that this is the biggest blockhead he’s ever met (*Obbligato, ah si! obbligato*). Dulcamara tells him that he must wait until the next day for the results and enters the inn. Nemorino samples his potion. He is starting to feel the effects when Adina enters and wonders why he’s so happy. He tells Adina that tomorrow his heart will be cured.

Sergeant Belcore arrives and Adina tells him that she’s considered his offer of marriage and agrees to marry him in 6 days time. Another soldier arrives and tells Belcore that they have new orders and they must leave by the next morning. Adina agrees to marry him that night. Nemorino is upset (*Adina, credimi*), and begs Adina to wait one more day. Adina offers to get the notary and Nemorino begs for Dulcamara’s help. Everyone, except Nemorino, is excited about the impending wedding.

## Act II Scene 1 – The inside of Adina’s farmhouse

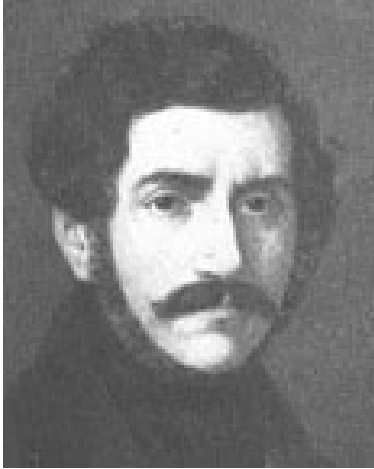
Everyone is celebrating the upcoming wedding. Dulcamara and Adina sing a duet (*Io son ricco e tu sei bella*). The notary arrives, but Adina wants to wait for Nemorino. Nemorino appears and tells Dulcamara that he needs more elixir in a hurry. Dulcamara agrees to wait for one hour in the inn, as Nemorino has no money to pay for more elixir. Belcore is getting irritated with Adina’s delaying and Nemorino tells Belcore that he needs money. Belcore tells him that there is a signing bonus if he joins the army. Desperate, Nemorino joins the army.

## Scene 2 – A rustic courtyard

All the village girls are all talking about Nemorino’s wealthy uncle who as died and left him as the only heir. Nemorino enters, slightly drunk on the elixir he bought with his enlistment money. Nemorino is surrounded by girls and Dulcamara declares it is due to his elixir. Adina approaches Nemorino, but her jealousy flares as she sees all the girls around Nemorino. Nemorino leaves, followed by the girls. Dulcamara brags to Adina about his love potion and Adina asks if he sold some to Nemorino. Dulcamara tells Adina that Nemorino was so overwhelmed with his love for Adina that he enlisted to get more money for more elixir. Adina now realizes the depths of Nemorino’s feeling for her and Nemorino realizes that Adina loves him (*Una furtiva lagrima*). Adina enters and tells Nemorino that she has bought back his enlistment papers (*Prendi, per me sei libero*) and hands them to him. As she turns to leave, Nemorino asks her if there was anything else she’d like to say but she says no. He gives her back the papers stating that if he’s been tricked by the doctor, he’d rather die as a soldier. Adina tells Nemorino that she does love him and Nemorino believes that Dulcamara has sold him a true elixir. Belcore is rather surprised at this turn of events, but is good hearted about this new development. Dulcamara reappears and tells everyone of Nemorino’s good fortune from his uncle and states that his elixir can make people fall in love and become rich. Dulcamara leaves and Adina and Nemorino are thankful for his magic elixir.

## Gaetano Donizetti

### 1797 - 1848



Gaetano Donizetti was born November 29, 1797 in Bergamo, Italy. He, Bellini and Rossini were the three great masters of the opera style known as *bel canto*. Bel canto operas had set numbers of separate arias and ensembles that featured particularly florid vocal writing designed to show off the human voice to maximum effect. These works demanded great virtuosity from the singers and served as star vehicles for leading operatic performers. Donizetti dominated the Italian opera scene during the years between Bellini's death and Verdi's rise to fame after *Nabucco*.

Donizetti's musical talents were apparent at an early age, and he was admitted to the Lezioni Caritatevoli school on full scholarship when he was nine years old. The school was founded by Simon Mayr, who had a significant influence upon Donizetti's musical development and helped the young composer launch his professional career. Mayr sent Donizetti to Padre Stanislao Mattei, the teacher of Rossini, for further compositional

instruction. Mayr also partially paid for the lessons with Mattei and arranged for Bartolomeo Merelli to write the librettos for Donizetti's early stage works.

Between 1817 and 1821, Donizetti received several commissions from Paolo Zanca. His first staged opera was *Enrico di Borgogna* in 1818. He wrote several other works during this period, including chamber and church music as well as opera. It was the success of his fourth opera, *Zoraide di Grenata*, that caught the attention of Domenico Barbaia, the most important theater manager of his time. Barbaia offered Donizetti a contract. The young composer accepted it and moved to Naples, which was Barbaia's primary business location. For the next eight years Donizetti wrote works for Rome and Milan as well as Naples, with mixed success. It was not until 1830, with the performances of *Anna Bolena* in Milan, that Donizetti achieved international fame.

Donizetti was a prolific composer, writing both comic and serious operas as well as solo vocal music. Throughout his career he battled with the powerful Italian censors to put his works on stage. Two of his best-known comedies, *L'elisir d'amore* (1832) and *Don Pasquale* (1843), are considered masterpieces of comic opera and continue to hold their places in the standard performing repertoire. Perhaps his most famous serious opera is *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), although *Anna Bolena* has enjoyed considerable success in this century through the efforts of such artists as Maria Callas and Joan Sutherland. Donizetti was well acquainted with the greatest singers of his day, and he created many of the roles in his operas for their specific vocal talents.

As Donizetti's fame grew, he was able to accept a variety of engagements, writing operas for Paris as well as the famous opera houses of Italy. He relocated to Paris in 1838. It was there that he composed *La fille du régiment* in 1840, which is still frequently performed. Donizetti was also appointed music director for the Italian opera season at the Kärntnertheater in Vienna, a position secured for him by Mirelli, the librettist for his early works.

Donizetti was a friendly and sincere man, supportive of fellow composers and other artists, and loyal to his long-time mentor Mayr. Unfortunately, he endured great tragedy in his personal life. Donizetti had met his wife Virginia Vasselli while he was in Rome in the 1820's and married her in 1828. They had three children, none of whom survived. His parents died in the mid 1830s. A year after his parents' death, his wife succumbed to a cholera epidemic. Donizetti himself suffered from cerebro-spinal syphilis. Symptoms of his illness became evident as early as 1843; by 1845 his condition deteriorated to the point that he was institutionalized for almost a year and a half. His friend from Vienna, Baron Lannoy, interceded with Donizetti's nephew to have the composer moved to a Paris apartment where he could be cared for and receive visitors. Verdi came to see him there and was deeply saddened by his colleague's condition. Friends in Bergamo finally arranged for Donizetti to be brought back to his home town, where he stayed at Baroness Scotti's palace until his death in 1848.

Donizetti was reputed to have great facility and could compose very quickly. His favorite librettist was Salvatore Cammarano, with whom he first collaborated on *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Donizetti often assisted in writing the librettos for his operas. He completed 65 operas during his career; *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Pasquale*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor* are generally considered the outstanding examples of his work. His compositional style proved influential for future Italian opera composers, most notably Verdi.



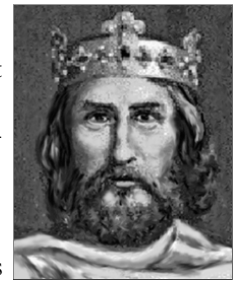
# Where in the World?



Italy's history has its origins as early as 2.5 million years ago. The regions of Italy (north and south) developed differently based on immigration and climate. The southern region was largely agricultural and had some metalworking skills brought by immigrants. Northern Italy tended towards the culture of northern Europe with wooden villages, bronze working and cremation ceremonies. The Iron Age brought immigrants from Greece (in southern Italy) and the Etruscans (in central Italy and Po Valley).

The city of Rome was founded in 753 B.C. but the real power came during the Roman Empire in the final century prior to AD. After the death of Julius Caesar, and the defeat of Marc Antony by Caesar's son Octavian (later known as Augustus), Rome was the center of a huge empire that expanded throughout Europe and parts of Africa. Rome came under control of a variety of groups including Germans, Goths, Lombards and Byzantines. Italy was becoming a center for the growing Christian population. Italy was not a unified country at this time, it was a collection of city states. Emperor Constantine had moved to Constantinople which later became known as the Rome of the East.

The 5<sup>th</sup> through 7<sup>th</sup> centuries saw Italy under the influence of the Lombards. The Popes of the time resisted the Lombard rule and held lands that later became the Papal states. Another Germanic group, the Franks, invaded Italy in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century and Italy came under the rule of Charlemagne. Italy was a battle ground between the Franks, Byzantines and Saracens (from North Africa). By the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the rise of the city states became the primary form of government. The larger cities of Italy including Florence, Genoa, Mi-



Charlemagne

"Italy." *Infoplease Atlas*.

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9 Jul. 2002

<<http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/country/italy.html>>.

lan and Venice had a burgher government system (the burghers were a wealthy merchant class) and were powerful city states. The southern part of Italy was changing and by the 12<sup>th</sup> century there was a king in Sicily (Roger II). For northern cities, there was still the struggle between the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Church. The Popes' had a tremendous amount of power and influence and this led to conflict with the Holy Roman Emperors. The city states had powerful families ruling them including the Viscontis in Milan, the Medicis in Florence and the Estes in Ferrara. During the Renaissance, these families were the patrons of the arts in their respective cities. In particular, the Medicis made Florence the cultural center of Italy with their support of the arts.

By the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, Italy was under new control with the Habsburgs (Charles V) and eventually came under Spanish control. The 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the end of the Renaissance in Italy and some independence of kingdoms including Sardinia and the Two Sicilies. The century also saw a series of wars throughout Europe including the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Napoleon invaded Italy but by 1814 had to withdraw. In 1815, Italy consisted of several city states, some were independent (Sardinia, Two Sicilies, Papal States, Tuscany) while others were controlled by Austria (primarily in north and central Italy). The control of parts of Italy led to the unification movement (Risorgimento). In 1859, Camillo Benso (with the support of France and England) took control of Lombardy and in 1860, all of Italy that was north of the Papal States (except Venice) was added to the Kingdom of Sardinia. Giuseppe Garibaldi and his "red shirts" took control of the southern part of Italy. In 1861, the Kingdom of Italy was official. Only Venice and Rome were not part of the new kingdom although within 9 years they would be. The Pope was furious (he had lost both Rome and a large amount of land) and he refused to recognize the new country.

Italy's expansionist ideas included unsuccessfully trying to conquer Ethiopia and Turkey. They joined with Germany and Austria in 1882 to increase their influence. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, much of Europe was involved in World War I with Italy remaining neutral until 1915 when they joined the Allied forces only because they had been promised land that they

considered part of Italy. They were only granted a small portion of the land they had hoped for. By the end of World War I, Italy was in desperate financial straits.



Mussolini & Hitler

In 1919, Benito Mussolini began a new political movement called Fascism. By 1922, Mussolini had been named Prime Minister by King Emmanuel III and within four years, Mussolini was Italy's dictator (or later called "duce"). Mussolini wanted to expand Italy's territories and influence which led to conquering Ethiopia in 1936 and supporting Franco's efforts in the Spanish Civil War. By the late 1930's, Mussolini allied himself with another fascist dictator, Adolf Hitler of Germany, and together they created the Rome-Berlin Axis. World War II began with Germany's blitzkrieg across Europe and Italy was solidly on Germany's side of the war. Mussolini did not fare well during the war. Mussolini was ousted by his own leadership and escaped to northern Italy. The king and the southern part of Italy surrendered to the Allies and joined in the fight against their former allies, Germany. In 1945, the Germans were out of Italy and Mussolini was caught and executed.

After World War II, by popular election, the monarchy was ended in Italy and a new republic with a constitution was created. Along with help from the United States, Italy recovered economically from World War II and joined NATO. The latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Italy was marked with prosperity, struggle, inflation, unemployment and surges of violence from extremist groups. The Italian government has often been plagued with scandal and, at times, left Italy in chaos. Their current leader is multi-millionaire Silvio Berlusconi.

# Magic in Opera

Magic has always played a role in opera. Whether it's a magical potion, unearthly creatures, a magic castle or a spell, magic can heighten the story line of any opera. In this chapter, we're going to explore the variety of magic used in opera, from fairy tales and potions to Christian and Greek mythos.

To begin, let's look at the "magic" potion bought by Nemorino from Dr. Dulcamara. In Gaetano Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love*, the love-struck hero, Nemorino, is convinced that the only way he'll be able to win the love of Adina is through a magic potion. Dr. Dulcamara, the traveling medicine man, sells him a bottle of cheap wine that he calls "Tristan's Magic Love Potion". While the wine isn't magical by any means, Nemorino believes that it is and after he drinks it, he gains confidence. Ultimately, it is this confidence that wins Adina and the opera ends with the celebration that the elixir worked.

While Nemorino's magic elixir wasn't really magical, the love potion in Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* is real. Composed in 1865, Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* explored the ancient tale of these two lovers. The abbreviated story goes that Tristan has gone to Ireland to bring Isolde to Cornwall (England) to marry his uncle, King Mark. Isolde is not happy with this arrangement and wants to kill Tristan (who killed her betrothed Morold in a fight). She chooses a death potion to give to Tristan. He drinks and so does Isolde. Neither knows that Isolde's maid, Brangane, has switched the death potion with a love potion. When Tristan and Isolde look at each other after drinking the potion, they fall deeply in love. Their love is discovered by the King, Tristan is mortally wounded in a duel and banished. Isolde comes to comfort Tristan who dies in her arms. She dies not long after Tristan. Instead of extolling the virtues of the love potion, it all comes to a bad end.

Fairy tales have been a favorite of opera composers and librettists as they have clear story lines, obvious heroes/heroines, great villains and use magic as the means to an end. Humperdinck's *Hansel und Gretel* and Massenet's *Le Cendrillon* (Cinderella) are examples.

*Hansel und Gretel* was changed from the original Brothers Grimm story by Humperdinck's sister (Adelheid Wette) when she wrote the libretto to reflect a more misguided rather than evil mother and she added more religious overtones. However the basic story remained. Family is broke, children ruin dinner, mother sends children into woods to pick strawberries, children are lost and find gingerbread house, witch appears and wants to eat children, children cook her instead, all is well with the world. In the opera, Humperdinck writes an aria for the witch *Hocus Pocus* implying her use of magic as well as her ability to freeze the children into place. In addition to the witch, Humperdinck includes the magical characters of the Sand Man and the Dew Fairy as well as a host of angels who watch over the children as they sleep in the woods.

Massenet's *Le Cendrillon* follows the Charles Perrault fairy tale very closely with a fairy godmother, glass slippers and all. Rossini's *La Cenerentola*, also based on Cinderella, chose not to have any magical characters at all. Instead of the fairy godmother, Cinderella is aided by Prince Ramiro's teacher/philosopher Alidoro. Both operas work with and without the magic.

Other lesser known fairy tales have also been made into operas including Antonin Dvorak's *Rusalka* (based on *Undine* and *The Little Mermaid*), Mikhail Glinka's *Ruslan and Lyudmila* (complete with magical maidens and castle), Nicolay Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Snow Maiden* (after an Ostrovsky fairy tale) and Wolfgang Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (*The Magic Flute*). But fairy tales aren't the only sources for magic in opera.

Some operas include unearthly beings like sprites, fairies, elves, ghosts, vampires, witches and fortune-tellers. The beings have a magic of their own and often wreak havoc with the humans who are around them. Several operas include these types of characters. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, originally written by William Shakespeare and adapted into an opera by Benjamin Britten, is one of the most famous texts where fairies and sprites run amok and create chaos for the humans. The character of Oberon (King of the Fairies/Elves) and Puck were also used in Carl Maria von Weber's opera *Oberon*. Ghosts play a role in Benjamin Britten's adaptation of the Henry James' novel *The Turn of the Screw*. As much as their new governess and household staff try to protect the children, they are still subject to the evils of the world as represented by the ghosts. Even though the ghost of Quint (the manservant) is defeated, it is not without its price as the young boy, Miles, dies shortly after. Even vampires get the operatic treatment in Heinrich Marschner's *Der Vampyr* (1828). The libretto was based on a fragmented work by Lord Byron, but vampire stories were the rage in France during the early 19<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury. Including witches, hobgoblins and vampires, *Der Vampyr* centers around wealthy Lord Ruthven (a vampire) who is to marry an innocent girl, Malwina. Malwina is loved by Edgar Aubrey who learns of Lord Ruthven's secret and reveals it on their wedding night. Lord Ruthven is dragged to hell and Malwina and Aubrey are given permission to marry.

The best use of witches in opera (aside from the Medea offerings below) is in Verdi's *Macbeth* (1847) based on Shakespeare's play of the same name. Often witches and fortune-tellers will give prophecies to the main characters so they know what's in store for them. Such is the case with *Macbeth*. In the opening act, the witches predict that Macbeth will be thane (ruler) of Cawdor, he will be king and Banquo's heirs will be kings. These prophecies will return throughout the opera and propel the story forward. In Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* (The Masked Ball – 1859), the fortune-teller Ulrica prophesies that Riccardo (the King of Sweden who is in disguise) will be killed by the next person who shakes his hand. He shakes the hand of his closest friend, Renato. Unfortunately, Riccardo is in love with Amelia (Renato's wife) and the prophecy comes true when Renato kills Riccardo at a masked ball.

This brings us to mythology and legend. These two categories have given countless stories to opera composers and librettists. Although there are too many to name here, Greek mythology has contributed greatly to the story lines of opera for centuries. The story of Orpheus alone generated at least three operas and Medea at least two operas. Outside of Greek mythology, Christian mythos is next in line for generating a large number of operas. The character of Mephistopheles or the devil has long been a villain used in many operas.

The most famous operas featuring Mephistopheles are all based around Goethe's story of *Faust*. Faust is an old man who realizes that he cannot be happy through knowledge alone. He contemplates suicide and renounces happiness and faith. He calls upon Satan and Mephistopheles appears. Faust admits that he wants to be young again and Mephistopheles agrees upon the condition that Faust sign over his soul. Faust woos a young innocent girl Marguerite who he leads into disgrace. Though disgraced and imprisoned, Marguerite calls for divine protection when Mephistopheles urges her to follow him and Faust. Marguerite dies and Faust watches as her soul goes to heaven. The first opera based on this story is Charles Gounod's *Faust* (1859) that is still a standard in the opera repertoire. Next was Arrigo Boito (Verdi's librettist and composer in his own right) with *Mefistofele* (1868). This version ends a bit differently than Gounod's in that at the end of *Mefistofele*, Faust gains salvation at the end of his life and is welcomed into heaven. Finally, there's Ferruccio Busoni's *Doktor Faust* (1925). In this opera, it is a magical book that summons Mephistopheles who plays a greater role in the downfall of Faust. At the end, Faust ends up switching souls with his dead illegitimate child. The child is able to live and Faust dies. But these three operas aren't the only ones to use the devil or hell as the final ending to the wicked.

Carl Maria von Weber's *Der Freischütz* (1821) used the Black Huntsman (Samiel) to represent evil/the devil as well as magic bullets. Max is the dupe in this story with Caspar trying to get Max's soul damned while saving his own. It backfires and Max is forgiven by one and all for his foolishness. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787) uses hell as a way to punish the title character for his misdeeds as does Dargomizhsky's *The Stone Guest* (1872). The idea of a stone statue coming to life and punishing wrong doers by taking them to hell was around for several hundred years prior to Moliere's *Don Juan* and Pushkin's *The Stone Guest* (inspirations for the above operas).

Legends also have their role in the opera pantheon. No composer was more attuned to legends and myth than Richard Wagner. Many of his operas feature story lines based on Germanic and Norse legends and myths as well as Christian mythology. Let's start with the Germanic legends that were immortalized in Wagner's four opera cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (The Nibelung's Ring). The four operas are *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* – over 17 hours of opera total! Wagner was a master of the leitmotif that basically means that some characters, things,

and ideas have their own melody or motif. Throughout all the operas, several motifs recur including the motif of the Rhinemaidens, the ring, the Renunciation of Love, etc.

Each opera is very detailed and too much information to relay in this chapter. The main object in the story is the ring forged by Alberich (an ugly dwarf) from the gold of the Rhinemaidens. The ring gives Alberich power (no, it's not Tolkien) but it is taken away from him by Wotan, the leader of the gods. Alberich curses the ring and says it will bring unhappiness and doom upon all those who use it. This sets the stage for all those who possess the ring. Wotan gives the ring as part of a ransom treasure to two giants, Fafner and Fasolt – Fafner proceeds to kill his brother Fasolt and hides his treasure and the ring in a cave to guard. To remove the curse of the ring from the gods, a hero who is pure and unselfish must be found so Wotan goes about creating this hero by fathering Siegmund and Sieglinde. Wotan hopes that Siegmund will be that hero and he is subjected to many trials to prove himself. Unfortunately, Siegmund falls in love with Sieglinde and they father Siegfried. One of Wotan's Valkyries (warrior maidens), Brunnhilde defies her father by defending Siegmund. Wotan places her under a magical sleep surrounded by fire that only a hero can enter. That hero was Siegfried. Siegfried was raised by Mime (Alberich's brother) and was fearless. He killed Fafner and took the gold. He rescues Brunnhilde and claims her as his bride. Alberich's son, Hagen, drugs Siegfried who then gives Brunnhilde to Gunther, king of the Gibichungs. Siegfried gets his memory back and is killed by Hagen. Brunnhilde lights a funeral pyre for herself, gives the ring back to the Rhinemaidens and rides into the flames to be reunited with Siegfried in death. Thus ends the era of the gods.

Wagner didn't only use Germanic legends, he also used nautical legends like that told in *Der Fliegende Holländer* (The Flying Dutchman) and Christian legends like the Holy Grail. The Flying Dutchman is permitted to return to land once every seven years to redeem himself from a curse (he said something blasphemous). Until he finds someone to love him faithfully, he will never be redeemed. Through Daland, a local fisherman, the Dutchman finds Senta, Daland's daughter who is already loved by Erik. Senta promises to be faithful to the Dutchman. Erik is heartbroken and tries to stop the inevitable. The Dutchman releases Senta from her vow, but Senta promises to be faithful and throws herself into the sea, thus breaking the spell on the Flying Dutchman and his crew.

Wagner also used the Arthurian legends about knights and the search for the Holy Grail in three operas; *Tannhauser* (1845), *Lohengrin* (1850) and *Parsifal* (1882). Each dealt with the search for the Holy Grail and redemption. In each opera, characters are tested and often fail like Elsa in *Lohengrin*. The mystical knight Lohengrin appears and weds Elsa on the condition that she does not ask his name. Persuaded by evil around her, Elsa eventually asks the knight's name and he tells her that he is a Grail knight and his name is Lohengrin. But because she has asked his name, he must return home. He restores her brother from a curse and leaves while Elsa faints away, lifeless. Throughout the four hundred year plus history of opera, composers, librettists and the public have been fascinated with stories about magic, legends and myths. And while modern operas of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century tend towards more realistic story lines (*Dead Man Walking*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Cold Sassy Tree*), there will always be room for magic in opera.

# What to listen for in *The Elixir of Love*

One of the first arias in the opera begins with Nemorino sighing over his love for Adina, the owner of a farm. He bemoans the fact that she doesn't even know he exists.

Quanto è bel-la, quan-to è ca-ra! Più la ve-do e più mi pia-ce...ma in quel  
Oh how charming, oh how love-ly! When I see her I am a-dor-ing...but my

cor non son ca-pa-ce lieve af-fet-to ad in-spi-rar.  
love she is ig-nor-ing, love for me was never meant.

Following Nemorino's aria, Adina laughs over the ridiculous story that she's reading. It is the story of Tristan and Isolde. She tells everyone around her that Tristan had been given a powerful love potion by a magician so that Isolde would never leave him. Adina says that she wishes she knew the recipe for such a potion.

Del-la cru-de-le I-sol-de  
Love for the cruel I-sol-de

- ta il bel Tri-sta-no ar-de-a, nè fil di  
da in Tris-dan's heart was burn-ing, though vain was

spe-me a-ve-a di pos-se-der-la un di.  
all his year-n-ing fate had not meant it to be.

Nemorino finally tells Adina how he feels about her and Adina brushes it off. She tells him that while she thinks he is kind, she feels nothing for him. She also tells him that she is like the wind that is fickle, it is the nature of things.

Chiedi all'au - ra lu - sin - ghie - - ra per-chè  
Ask the way-ward breeze that wan - - ders why it

vo - - la sen - za po - - - sa or sul gi - glio, or sul-la ro - sa, or sul-  
blows so, wil - ly - nil - - - ly, from the ro - ses over the li - ly, o - ver

pra - to, or sul ru-scel: ti di - rà che è in lei na - tu - - ra l'esser  
mead-ows to the stream: they will tell you 'tis their na - - - ture that they

mo - bi - lee in - fe - del, è na - tu - ra, è na - tu - ra  
fly from dream to dream, 'tis their nature, 'tis their nature,

Perhaps one of the most famous tenor arias in the opera repertoire, *Una furtiva lagrima* is Nemorino's aria about how he feels that he could die of love for Adina.

U - na fur - ti - va  
Soft - ly a fur - tive

la - grima .....  
teardrop fell.....

negl' oc - chi suoi spun - tò:  
shadowed her spark - ling eyes:

quel - le fe - sto - - se gio - ..vani in - - vi - di - ar sem -  
see - ing the oth - - ers fol - - low me has - - caused her jeal - ous

-brò:  
sighs.

che più cer - can - do io vo?  
What is there more to prize?

che più cer - can - do io vo?  
What more than this could I prize?

M'a - - - ma, sì,  
Sigh - - - ing, she

m'a - - - ma, lo ve - - do, lo ve - - do.  
loves me, I saw that she loves me.