

SOME OPERAS STIR THE SOUL. SOME CHILL AUDIENCES TO THE bone. Some are bittersweet, and many are tragic. *Don Pasquale* is pure, unadulterated farce, set to music that's sparkling, brainy, and jaw-droppingly demanding—and yet it touches on deeper levels of emotion that make it one of the great humane comedies in opera. Gaetano Donizetti's tale of an old bachelor and the loved ones who trick him into doing the right thing feels as fresh as any recent movie or TV show, though it's been charming music lovers for nearly 170 years.

Russian diva Anna Netrebko, previously seen in the *Live in HD* transmissions of Gounod's romantic *Roméo et Juliette*, Offenbach's fantastical *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and Donizetti's own tragic *Lucia di Lammermoor*, now turns to comedy. As the wily Norina, she plays a practical joke on John Del Carlo's puffed-up Don Pasquale; the plot is masterminded by Mariusz Kwiecien as the devious Malatesta, with help from Matthew Polenzani's Ernesto. The Met's Music Director James Levine is on the podium.

The opera's straightforward story, the exhilarating freshness of its sounds, and the essential comedy of its basic premise all make *Don Pasquale* highly accessible to a young audience. The main Classroom Activity in this guide takes a look at the opera's dramatic structure through the lens of the familiar contemporary analogue of the TV sitcom, to spark a discussion about comedy and the use of genre conventions in making art funny. Other activities offer an up-close look at the meticulous artistry with which Donizetti raises *Don Pasquale* from merely funny to hilarious, humane, and full of genuine feeling. By familiarizing students with the wit and rhythm of *Don Pasquale*, the guide can prepare students to watch carefully, think critically, and above all, laugh heartily at this *Live in HD* production.

THE WORK: *DON PASQUALE*

Music by Gaetano Donizetti
(1797–1848)

An opera in three acts, sung in Italian

Libretto by Giovanni Ruffini and the
composer

First performed on January 3, 1843 at
the Théâtre Italien, Paris, France

PRODUCTION

James Levine, Conductor

Otto Schenk, Production

Rolf Langenfass, Set and Costume
Designer

Duane Schuler, Lighting Designer

STARRING

Anna Netrebko (Norina)

Matthew Polenzani (Ernesto)

Mariusz Kwiecien (Malatesta)

John Del Carlo (Don Pasquale)

Production a gift of The Sybil B. Harrington
Endowment Fund

Revival a gift of The Dr. M. Lee Pearce
Foundation



Anna Netrebko



Matthew Polenzani



Mariusz Kwiecien



John Del Carlo

The guide includes four types of activities. Reproducible student resources for the activities are available at the back of this guide.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:

a full-length activity, designed to support your ongoing curriculum

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS:

opportunities to focus on excerpts from *Don Pasquale* to enhance familiarity with the work

PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:

to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, calling attention to specific aspects of this production

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:

a wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students' views of the performing arts and humanities

The activities in this guide address several aspects of *Don Pasquale*:

- the opera as a model of timeless comedy conventions
- Donizetti's witty musical depiction of dialogue
- comedy's ability to convey serious cultural messages
- the universal significance of a story set in a specific era of the past
- the production as a unified work of art, involving creative decisions by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera

The guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Don Pasquale* whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, seeking to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts in general—as a medium of entertainment and as creative expression.



Norina's home, Act I, Scene 2

PHOTO: MARTY SOHL/METROPOLITAN OPERA

ACT I *Scene 1: Don Pasquale's home, somewhere in Rome, early one morning long ago.* As the overture (**Tracks 13, 15, 16, and 18**) ends, Don Pasquale da Corneto, a wealthy old bachelor, is waiting for his doctor, Malatesta, who has promised to come with good news: he's found a wife for Pasquale (**Track 1**). She's a lovely, shy young woman—in fact, the doctor's own sister, Sofronia. But when Malatesta arrives, we see him join in Pasquale's excitement only to ridicule the old man under his breath. It turns out that Pasquale wants to marry out of spite. He would be ready to leave his entire estate to his nephew Ernesto, if only Ernesto would marry a rich woman. But the nephew has refused, professing his love for the beautiful young widow Norina. Now Pasquale wants to take a wife—and thereby get an heiress to keep Ernesto from inheriting his fortune. Ernesto, of course, is shocked to hear of his uncle's intentions.

Scene 2: Norina's home, not far away, a bit later the same morning. Norina, too, is waiting for Malatesta (**Tracks 17 and 19–26**), who is going to fill her in on a practical joke he's playing. Meanwhile, she receives a sad letter from Ernesto. He is leaving Rome, disinherited by his uncle Pasquale, now that Malatesta has arranged Pasquale's marriage. When the doctor arrives, he assures Norina that she and Ernesto have nothing to fear: Pasquale will not marry since there is no Sofronia. Malatesta has made up the whole story. He wants Norina to play the part of Pasquale's bride. He explains that with his help and some training, Norina will drive Pasquale to desperation to eventually let her and Ernesto get married (**Track 2**).

ACT II *Pasquale's home, midday.* A disconsolate Ernesto leaves his uncle's home, unaware of Malatesta's plans, angry at the doctor for arranging his uncle's marriage, and grieving the loss of Norina. Malatesta arrives, together with a gentle, demure, veiled woman, whom he introduces as his sister Sofronia. Pasquale is delighted by his bride, who, together with Malatesta, makes fun of him in asides. The doctor brings a notary and a wedding contract has been drawn up, when Ernesto returns, hoping to have a final word with his uncle. He is enlisted as a witness, much to his chagrin—until Malatesta quietly lets him in on the plot. The contract is sealed and, as planned, "Sofronia" instantly turns from a sweet convent girl into a nasty, insulting, controlling shrew, laughing all the way along with Ernesto (**Tracks 3–4**). She hires more servants, orders up a carriage and horses, announces plans to redecorate Pasquale's house, and starts to arrange a lavish wedding. In short, she drives Pasquale to comic fury.

ACT III *Scene 1: Pasquale's home, that afternoon.* Merchants and tradespeople come and go in the redecorated parlor, as Pasquale counts his mounting bills. "Sofronia" enters on her way to the theater. Pasquale forbids her to go but she won't be hindered and slaps him. Pasquale, by now a broken man, permits her to leave, but warns that if she does, he will not allow her back into his house (**Tracks 5–7**). "Sofronia" insists she

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Pasquale: “pahss-KWAHL-ay”

Malatesta: “mah-lah-TEST-ah”

Ernesto: “ehr-NEST-oh”

Norina: “no-REE-nah”

Sofronia: “so-FRO-nee-ah”

will return. He responds that he’ll divorce her if she leaves—but she does, anyway. When she has gone, Pasquale comes upon a letter apparently sent to her by a lover whom she intends to meet that very evening in Pasquale’s garden. Now angrier than ever, the old man conceives a plan of his own. He heads out to send for Malatesta (not knowing the doctor is in on the trick). With Malatesta’s help, Pasquale believes, he will nip Sofronia’s affair in the bud.

With their master away, the staff in Pasquale’s house gossip about him and his new bride. Malatesta shows up with Ernesto, who agrees to play the part of Sofronia’s secret lover. Ernesto leaves and Pasquale returns to fill the doctor in on the letter from his wife’s lover. Malatesta plays along and agrees to help Pasquale catch the duplicitous Sofronia redhanded. That way, Pasquale figures, he can end his disastrous engagement (**Tracks 11–12**).

Scene 2: The garden of Pasquale’s home, late afternoon. Ernesto and Norina, waiting in the garden to play their parts, declare their love (**Track 14**). Ernesto hides as Pasquale and Malatesta arrive. Confronted by Pasquale, “Sofronia” denies having a lover. She insists on returning to her “home.” Pasquale rebuffs her. Tomorrow, he says, the new lady of the house will arrive: the wife of his nephew Ernesto! He is returning to his original intention. He will let Ernesto inherit his fortune after all, even if his nephew chooses to marry Norina. That should get Sofronia out of his life. But she refuses to leave until Pasquale can prove that Ernesto and Norina have really married.

Malatesta now reveals the truth: he calls Ernesto out from his hiding place, unmask “Sofronia,” and wins for the couple not only Pasquale’s blessings on their marriage, but a large annual stipend of money (**Track 8**). Embarrassed but grateful, the old bachelor Pasquale has learned to act his age (**Tracks 9–10**).

VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO: the highest-pitched general type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO: the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

CONTRALTO: the lowest female voice, also called an alto

TENOR: the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE: the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS: the lowest sounding male voice

WHO'S WHO IN *DON PASQUALE*

CHARACTER		VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Don Pasquale	An elderly bachelor	bass	Old Pasquale is wealthy, stubborn, and vain.
Dr. Malatesta	Pasquale's physician and advisor	baritone	Malatesta is the mastermind of the practical joke at the heart of the opera—tricking Pasquale into thinking he has found a young bride.
Ernesto	Pasquale's nephew	tenor	Pasquale won't leave Ernesto his fortune if Ernesto marries his beloved Norina. Malatesta's scheme is meant to fix that.
Norina	A young widow, in love with Ernesto	soprano	Norina loves Ernesto but she plays the part of "Sofronia," a woman in search of a husband, in order to trick Pasquale.
Carlino	Malatesta's cousin, a notary	bass	



ABOUT THE DIRECTOR For a quarter of a century, Metropolitan Opera audiences have known Otto Schenk as the creative force behind the Met's epic production of Richard Wagner's *Ring* cycle (among many other operas he has staged for the Met). But in his native Austria, Schenk also has long been recognized as a deft comic actor. When he turned those comedic talents toward Donizetti's effervescent *Don Pasquale*, the *New York Times* called the result "brilliant," "insightful," and "wonderful." "Mr. Schenk," said the *Times*, "prods us to see this work in a provocatively new way."

Schenk has proved time and again that a classic setting can be as thrilling and as contemporary as any music video. For this, his valedictory production at the Met, the 80-year-old director created a *Don Pasquale* that hilariously spans the generation gap. Pasquale himself moves with utmost seriousness of purpose through a comic bedlam that is, in the end, of his own making. Schenk imbues the old bachelor with honest feeling, unearthing not only the humor but also the humanity in Donizetti's score. Add a hefty helping of physical comedy, and this 1843 comic opera feels like a TV sitcom. As the *Times* wrote, "the only way to make a rich comedy truly funny is to take it seriously." It's hard to conceive of a director more prepared to meet that standard than the indefatigable Otto Schenk.

Comedic Blueprint: A Close Look at Comedic Structure

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible sheets available at the back of this guide.

You will also need the audio selections from *Don Pasquale* available online or on the accompanying CD.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Language Arts/Literature and Genre

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- to appreciate comedy as a timeless literary genre
- to identify a set of categories useful in analyzing comedy
- to practice critical thinking by applying those categories to a work of art
- to investigate Donizetti's use of varied musical approaches to meet comedic requirements
- to become familiar with the structure and musical style of *Don Pasquale*

Don Pasquale is one of those operatic masterworks that require little introduction. Students may not be familiar with this work in particular, but they'll recognize its format right away. With a comically flawed central character and a supporting cast determined to teach him a lesson, Donizetti's tale follows a timeless set of genre conventions. In this Classroom Activity, students will study those conventions and the effectiveness of their application in this opera. They will:

- be introduced to a set of categories for analyzing situation comedy
- listen closely to excerpts demonstrating the elements of sitcom in *Don Pasquale*
- identify qualities in music and libretto that support character-driven and situational humor
- apply their understandings by developing their own situation comedy plots

STEPS

There may be no single literary or dramatic form as familiar to young people in the 21st century as the TV sitcom. Familiarity however doesn't necessarily equal insight into its structure. Students may recognize *Don Pasquale*, with its self-deceiving old bachelor and his tricky but well-meaning associates, as a situation comedy, but nonetheless lack the analytical categories and critical thinking skills to explain what makes this sitcom tick. This activity offers one approach to analyzing situation comedy, applies it to *Don Pasquale*, then invites students to create their own comedies using the model.

Step 1: Introduce the topic of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*, an opera about an old bachelor who decides he's going to find a young bride. Ask your students what kind of a story this sounds like.

- Might it be sad?
- Inspiring?
- Funny?

What do students think the differences might be between these three different approaches to the same basic situation? For instance,

- Might the story show the old man being rejected and heartbroken again and again?
- Might the old man and the young woman find they have many things in common—and even more to learn from each other?
- Might it present the old man up as ridiculous for wanting something that he no longer should hope for?

Note that there are no right or wrong answers here. The point is to generate student observations about the effects creative decisions and conventions can have on dramatic genres.

Step 2: Introduce the term "situation comedy" or "sitcom." Give students the opportunity to develop a definition of the term, based on their own viewing experiences.



Anna Netrebko (Norina) and
Mariusz Kwiecien (Dr. Malatesta)
inside Pasquale's home

PHOTO: MARTY SOHL/METROPOLITAN OPERA

Have students think about the TV shows they watch or are familiar with. Which would they identify as sitcoms? Why? (See the sidebar: Comedic Situations)

Step 3: Review the basic plot and characters of *Don Pasquale*, writing the key, **bold-faced** terms on the board: A foolish **old man** decides to find a young bride. His **tricky friend** wants to teach him a lesson, so he arranges for a clever **young woman** to pretend to agree to marry the old man, then make his life miserable. The plot is made a bit thicker by the fact that the young woman is actually engaged to a **young man**, the old man's nephew, and they're going to use the trick to get his blessing for their marriage.

TIP You may want to distribute copies of the synopsis provided in this guide, then discuss it to lay stress on the bold-faced terms.

Step 4: Pose the following questions for students to think about:

- Could you develop a comedy with the same characters in different roles?
- Might the young woman want to teach the young man a lesson?
- Might the old man want to teach his tricky friend a lesson?
- How is it possible that you could switch things around and still have a comedy?

Step 5: Introduce a set of terms for describing the phases in the plot of a sitcom:

- **the set-up:** introducing the audience to the "situation" that gives context to the comedy
- **the plan:** building the audience's expectations about the comic events to come
- **the plan in action:** the heart of the comedy

- **the climax:** a turning point, often when the main character understands what’s happening
- **the resolution:** assuring the audience that good will has been re-established at the end of the comedy

The next part of the class will use *Don Pasquale* to demonstrate how these phases work together.

Step 6: Distribute the reproducible activity sheets for Comedic Blueprint (pages 19–24), which provide texts and translations for Tracks 1 through 10. These tracks present moments in *Don Pasquale* corresponding to the sitcom structure presented above. Play the tracks one at a time, and invite the students to comment. They should be as specific as possible in identifying qualities in the music, in the sound of the Italian dialogue, and in the meaning, that give each scene its particular effect.

LISTENING/DISCUSSION GUIDES

THE SET-UP (TRACK 1)

First things first. A situation comedy needs a situation. The writer needs to create a context for the events to follow. From the very start of *Don Pasquale*, it’s obvious to the audience that the old bachelor feels like he has a new lease on life because he’s going to get married. Donizetti’s music moves quickly in short bursts—conveying Don Pasquale’s newfound energy. The libretto raises the stakes by letting us hear exactly how he imagines his life changing for the better.

THE PLAN (TRACK 2)

Generally, situation comedies let the audience in on the plan ahead of time. This helps to build anticipation: we know something Don Pasquale doesn’t. We can imagine what will happen to him once the action gets underway.

It’s fun to be in on the plan, but the excerpt contained in **Track 2** is also entertaining in and of itself. The musical exchange between Norina and Malatesta is snappy and energetic, as the two figure out exactly how Norina should act in the part of Sofronia. The rhyme scheme adds an extra dose of merriment. By contrast, students can imagine how this scene would play if the music were spooky and ominous—if it suggested that the pair really intended to harm Don Pasquale.

THE PLAN IN ACTION (TRACKS 3-7)

The heart of any situation comedy is watching the plot unfold. Without the context of a set-up and plan, some of these events might be upsetting in the extreme. But we can laugh because we know it’s all a charade. Knowing the plan takes the sting out of the plan in action.

In the case of *Don Pasquale*, this double-edged phase of comedy involves Norina acting the part of Sofronia and Don Pasquale bearing the burden. **Tracks 3 and 4** present an exchange between “Sofronia” and her new husband moments after the

wedding contract has been signed. The tracks have been split so students can appreciate the rapid—and therefore comic—change in musical styles.

It's possible to imagine **Track 3** as a very serious argument between "Sofronia" and Pasquale. Tension and a genuine sense of jeopardy can play a part in comedy, largely because they create the possibility of release and comic relief.

Norina's dramatic bel canto flourishes at the end of **Track 3** instantly give way to the jolly, over-the-top continuation of her demands in **Track 4**. Her words are no less scornful and shrewish, but in **Track 4**, Donizetti sets them to music that lets the audience giggle both at her exaggeration and at the effect it must be having on Pasquale.

That effect is heard most dramatically in **Track 5**, as Don Pasquale bemoans his fate. Donizetti's music here is genuinely sad, with hardly any humor in evidence.

At this point, even Norina experiences a moment of regret (**Track 6**). All of a sudden, she—and the audience—empathize with Pasquale. Donizetti doesn't want the audience to miss this character turn, so, although both of the characters are talking to themselves, he combines their thoughts in one soaring line.

While it's not unusual for heartbreak to peek through the surface of comedy, Donizetti knows how to artfully pull the audience right back into a lighter mood, as he does in **Track 7**. Norina snaps back into snippy character, and Don Pasquale pulls himself together with the bold response that will begin the last round of action: he's not going to let her back into the house.

COMEDIC SITUATIONS Situation comedies, or sitcoms, are among the most common of TV shows, yet many students may not ever have thought about them. The essence of a sitcom is a cast of characters in a clearly defined set of relationships—for instance, the group of friends in *Seinfeld* or *Friends*, the workplace companions in *The Office* or *Scrubs*, or the married couples in shows like *Everyone Loves Raymond* and *I Love Lucy*. Viewers get to know the characters' personalities and the ways they relate to one another. The humor emerges from variations on the themes of the ongoing situation.

TV sitcoms are far from being the first genre of comedy to depend on a set of related characters. The Punch and Judy puppet shows of 17th-century England involved stock characters in standard situations. So did the commedia dell'arte (comedy of art) of the European Renaissance. In fact, some of the basic commedia dell'arte characters resemble characters in *Don Pasquale*: Pasquale is recognizable as the blustery Pantalone, Ernesto as the lovesick Pierrot, Malatesta as the scheming Scapino, and Norina as a wily Columbina. Like *Don Pasquale*, the plots of commedia dell'arte often began with a situation in which someone or something gets in the way of the lovers. Donizetti's opera plainly holds a place in a longstanding tradition of comedy—one that students can see unfold every day on television.

THE CLIMAX (TRACK 8)

Just like any serious drama, every comedy has a turning point: the moment where things become clear, where the characters are undeceived. The moment is generally humorous in itself, because it puts the main character's comic embarrassment on display. In *Don Pasquale*, it comes when Malatesta reveals Sofronia's true identity. Pasquale has already agreed to let Ernesto and Norina marry, in order to rid himself of his "wife"; in the music heard in **Track 8**, he learns exactly what that means.

Malatesta reveals the truth with the line "Norina è questa"—"this is Norina." It couldn't be more straightforward, but it gains a merry air by rhyming with the earlier "presta" ("right here"). This moment of revelation could be unpleasant for Pasquale, except that Donizetti unleashes the same kind of peppy back-and-forth we heard in **Track 2**. Notice that Donizetti and his librettist, Ruffini, don't let the old fellow catch on right away. The delay gives the audience a chance to relish the moment, which they've been expecting for nearly two hours. The bouncing melody allows them to enjoy what might otherwise be a humiliating moment for Pasquale.

THE RESOLUTION (TRACKS 9 AND 10)

It isn't enough for Don Pasquale to accept the truth. For situation comedy to work, the audience needs to know he's comfortable with it—that good will has been restored among the characters. This is the function of the music heard in **Tracks 9 and 10**. Norina provides the comic moral in **Track 9**, in magnificent, if slightly parodic, bel canto style. More importantly, Pasquale endorses the moral in **Track 10**, singing in perfect harmony with Malatesta, who caused him so much trouble. All is forgiven, something is learned, and the comedy is complete.

FOLLOW-UP: For homework, students may enjoy creating their own variations on the *Don Pasquale* situation-comedy formula. Using the set of character types outlined in Step 3, they can invent a situation and decide which character should be "taught a lesson," as well as what roles the others will play. Then they should sketch out the five phases of their sitcom plot, using the model discussed in Steps 5 and 6.

As an alternate assignment, students can watch video recordings of one favorite sitcom, identify the ongoing traits of the main characters, then analyze the plot of one episode, using the model discussed in Steps 5 and 6.

Patter Singing: A Close Look at Donizetti's Comic Dialogue

One of the delights of *Don Pasquale* is Donizetti's technique of setting two characters talking simultaneously in a precise, rhythmic chatter that both elucidates their feelings and delights the ear. The opera world calls this *parlando*, Italian for speaking, or "patter singing"—it may even remind your students of contemporary hip-hop.

One such sequence occurs in the middle of Act III. After Don Pasquale has reached the breaking point in his feelings about Sofronia, he enlists Malatesta in a plan of his own—to sneak into the garden and catch her redhanded with her lover. Malatesta, of course, knows that Sofronia is Norina and that there is no phantom lover, only Ernesto. Still, he plays along, helping Pasquale refine his plan until it suits both their purposes.

Track 11 presents the culmination of this dialogue, giving students a taste of *parlando*. Don Pasquale and Malatesta take careful aim, then jump in, six beats to the measure, two syllables per beat, skittering along, each on a single note, while the orchestra carries the melodic waltz underneath.

Track 12 takes the scene to its logical conclusion, as both men burst into laughter at their own cleverness before pulling themselves up to a big *bel canto* finish.

After listening, students may enjoy composing their own rhymes, individually or in pairs like Pasquale and Malatesta.

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS ARE BRIEF OPPORTUNITIES TO:

- help students make sense of opera
- whet their interest in upcoming transmissions of *The Met: Live in HD*

Each focuses on audio selections from *Don Pasquale* available online at metopera.org/education or on the accompanying CD. Texts and translations are available in the back of this guide.

These "mini-lessons" will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They're designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curriculum. Feel free to use as many as you like.



Costume sketch by Rolf Langenfass for *Don Pasquale*

Lessons Not In Books: A Listening Guide to Norina's Aria

Anyone who thinks the concept that you shouldn't believe everything you see, hear, or read, is a new idea hasn't experienced *Don Pasquale*. At the beginning of Act I, Scene 2, we meet a young woman who we soon will learn is Norina. She is reading a book. With that book as a touch point, Donizetti and Ruffini turn the traditional cavatina-cabaletta double aria form into a lesson in exactly why you shouldn't believe everything you read with "So anch'io la virtù magica"—"I also know the magic power."

The cavatina is traditionally a slow, thoughtful piece in which a character expresses his or her feelings. The style is well suited to Norina's activity here, reading a tale of chivalry and passion (**Track 19**). What does Norina make of this storybook romance? Students can hear her wordless response in **Track 20**: derisive laughter. Norina has her own ideas, flawlessly expressed in the cabaletta, the traditionally lilting second part of a double aria. The faster-paced cabaletta might reflect a character's joy after hearing good news, enthusiasm about an action he or she is about to take, or resolve in making a decision. In Norina's case, the cabaletta is an expression of pure self-confidence.

FUN FACT: The original libretto of *Don Pasquale* was written by Giovanni Ruffini. But Donizetti himself made so many changes to it that Ruffini insisted the Parisian producers take his name off the program at the premiere.



Anna Netrebko as Norina

PHOTO: MARTY SOHL/METROPOLITAN OPERA

FUN FACT: *Don Pasquale* was one of 68 operas written by Donizetti over a period of 29 years, including *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *La Fille du Régiment*, both presented at *The Met: Live in HD*. He averaged more than two and a third operas a year!

Norina's cabaletta has been broken into six successive tracks so students can catch the subtleties of characterization Donizetti wrote into the song. **Track 21** opens with the gentle tune heard as a theme in the overture (see Musical Highlight: Secret Messages). As Norina chants her catalogue of feminine wiles, she knowingly stretches the reference to love's "lento fuoco"—its slow-burning fire. She switches moods rapidly from a little smile ("un breve sorrisetto"), to crocodile tears, to "un subito languor"—sudden indifference. But in **Track 22**, she slows down a bit, becoming appropriately more serious as she sings about the heartless use of romantic trickery "per adescare un cor"—to lure in a heart.

In **Track 23**, Norina returns with relish to her list of effective facial expressions. The word "l'effetto" (effect, or effectiveness) is garnished with a crescendo—a measured increase in volume; then Norina repeats "conosco" ("I know"), both times with crescendos, as if to assure us that she does indeed know, before coming back to that "subito languor."

In **Track 24**, with audible excitement, she summarizes her thoughts. Here, however, she introduces a new phrase, her first reference to feeling, rather than mere conquest: "per ispirare amor" ("to inspire love"). The idea seems to sound right to her, as she exclaims "sì" ("yes"). She bursts into a song of pure feeling, perhaps even personal pleasure.

But Norina isn't done yet. In **Track 25**, she turns self-reflective. "I have a strange head," she sings, with idiosyncratic shifts in emphasis and a new, quirkier rhythm. (Her strongly stressed "mi piace"—"I like!"—is worth noting.) She doesn't just admit to mood swings; she enacts them in song. But there's no insecurity here, as we hear in the decisive way she repeats "testa bizzarra" ("strange head"), balances it with "cuore eccellente" ("excellent heart"), then lets forth another self-satisfied trill, as the orchestra dances away.

At last, catching up with the orchestra, Norina begins a richly ornamented reprise of the entire cabaletta (**Track 26**). Appropriately, the aria that began with Norina's rejection of romance-novel clichés concludes with elaborately ornamented repetitions of the phrase "mi piace scherzar"—"I love to kid around." This first encounter with Norina leaves listeners with no doubt about that.

Supporting Students During *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

Thanks to print and audio recording, much about opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself brings vital layers of sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheet to the transmission to fill out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Ratings matrices invite students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that call upon careful, critical thinking.

The basic activity sheet is called My Highs & Lows. Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *Don Pasquale*, the other activity sheet, Extreme Makeover, directs students' attention to the classic set design of this *Live in HD* production.

The Performance Activity reproducibles can be found in the back of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up after the *Live in HD* transmission.

The Wrong Trousers? A Discussion of Set and Costumes

IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at *The Met: Live in HD* transmission of *Don Pasquale*.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies/Global Cultures

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- to identify similarities and differences in the ways different cultures express the same purpose
- to explore the effects of cultural difference on an observer from outside the culture
- to assess the extent to which a creator can legitimately control interpretations of his or her work

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? This discussion will offer students an opportunity to review the notes on their My Highs & Lows sheet, as well as their thoughts about the set design in this Met production—in short, to see themselves as *Don Pasquale* experts.

In the Extreme Makeover Performance Activity for *Don Pasquale*, students paid close attention to Rolf Langenfass's design for this production. The set and costumes place the production in a 19th-century European setting, the era when the opera was written and in which it is traditionally set. But much against Donizetti's will, its first production in 1843 was set in the 18th century. The composer argued against dressing his singers in powdered wigs and velvet waistcoats. Not only did he feel that his characters should dress in contemporary, 19th-century outfits, but he insisted that the 18th-century style was ill-suited to the music he'd written.

Today's students might not have a strong sense of the difference in dress and décor between the 18th and 19th century. To get a sense of costumes throughout the ages, have students conduct some online research. A useful place to begin is the Metropolitan Museum's Costume Institute Web site.

As they assemble images, students may enjoy creating a display, such as a bulletin board, a Web site, or a hard-copy booklet, comparing the look of various time periods, for instance the 1700s, 1800s, and 1900s.

Donizetti lost the argument over set and costume design—but do your students think he had a point?

- Do old-fashioned costumes undermine Donizetti's intentions? Why or why not?
- What about current-day productions? If Donizetti were still alive, do students think he would still want the opera to be set in the 19th century or something more contemporary?
- What about changing the setting completely—perhaps to the Roaring 1920s, the Wild West, or the 21st century?

Students can express their opinions in persuasive essays. As evidence, they can use the images they've found, together with their recollections of the performance.

Issues to consider include:

- How do costume and set design affect an audience's experience at the opera?
- Should the composer always have the last word on how his work should be presented?
- On the other hand, should the artists assembled for a production, including the director, the costume and set designers, and the conductor, be free to interpret and present an opera as they see fit?
- If Donizetti did deserve the last word, should a 21st-century production of *Don Pasquale* be staged in contemporary dress?
- Ultimately, all these aspects amount to a single question: How universal is the story of *Don Pasquale*? Is it entirely specific to the culture of Europe in 1843? How might it translate to another time and place?

FUN FACT: Legend has it that Donizetti wrote *Don Pasquale* in only two weeks. In fact, it wasn't that quick, but the opera did premiere less than three months after he first put pen to paper, in October 1843.



Costume sketch by Rolf Langenfass for Dr. Malatesta

Here you'll find reproducibles of the activity sheets and resource pages for each *Don Pasquale* activity. Feel free to print these out and distribute them in your classroom.

My Highs & Lows and Extreme Makeover are activity sheets to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission. The latter is designed to focus student attention during the transmission and to support your post-transmission classroom work. My Highs & Lows is a collectible prompting closer attention to specific aspects of the opera. Use it to spark students' critical thinking about the production they've seen. You may also want to provide copies of My Highs & Lows to friends, family, and other members of the community attending the transmission.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY SHEET

Comedic Blueprint

The Set-Up

TRACK 1 (ACT I)

DON PASQUALE: I feel an unusual fire inside,
I can't resist it anymore.

At an old age, I forget my infirmities
and I feel as young as a 20-year old.

Ha! A dear, spunky, sweet little wife!
Then I see half a dozen kids born,
growing up, playing all around me.

Un fuoco insolito mi sento addosso,
ormai resistere io più non posso.
Dell'età vecchia scordo i malanni,
mi sento giovine come a vent'anni.

Deh! cara, affrettati, dolce sposina!
Ecco di bamboli mezza dozzina
veggo già nascere, veggo già crescere,
a me d'intorno veggo scherzar.

As you listen along, write your comments/notes below. Be as specific as possible in identifying qualities in the music, in the sound of the Italian dialogue, and in the meaning, that gives this scene its particular effect.

Music

Dialogue

Overall meaning and effect of scene

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY SHEET

Comedic Blueprint

The Plan

TRACK 2 (ACT I)

NORINA: I get it. I'll now take on the task.

MALATESTA: Now I'll teach you to play the part.

NORINA: Do you want me to be proud?

MALATESTA: No

NORINA: Do you want me to be sad?

MALATESTA: No, that's not the part.

NORINA: Do I cry?

MALATESTA: No.

NORINA: Or yell?

MALATESTA: No, that's not the part.

Hold still a minute and listen.

It's better to be simple.

NORINA: I could give a lesson in that!

MALATESTA: Neck twisted, tight mouth.

BOTH: Let's see what else.

NORINA: (*with biting emotion*) I'm ashamed that I'm an old maid.

MALATESTA: Great! Great, you little rascal! That'll be terrific.

Siamo intesi. Or prendo impegno.

Io la parte ora v'insegno.

Mi volete fiera?

No

Mi volete mesta?

No, la parte non è questa.

Ho da piangere?

No.

O gridare?

No, la parte non è questa.

State un poco ad ascoltare.

Convien far la semplicità.

Posso in questo dar lezione.

Collo torto, bocca stretta.

Or proviam quest'altra azione.

Mi vergogno... son zitella...

Brava, brava, bricconcella! Va benissimo così.

As you listen along, write your comments/notes below. Be as specific as possible in identifying qualities in the music, in the sound of the Italian dialogue, and in the meaning, that gives this scene its particular effect.

Music

Dialogue

Overall meaning and effect of scene

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY SHEET

Comedic Blueprint

The Plan in Action

TRACK 3 (ACT II)

NORINA: *(to Don Pasquale)* A man as decrepit,
heavy, and fat as you
cannot decently guide
a young woman.
I need an escort.
(She points to Ernesto.) He'll be my knight!

DON PASQUALE: Oh, that—excuse me—
that cannot be.

NORINA: Cannot be? Why?

DON PASQUALE: Because I don't want it.

NORINA: You don't want it?

DON PASQUALE: No.

NORINA: My darling, I beg you, forget that word.

Un uom qual voi decrepito,
qual voi pesante e grasso,
condur non può una giovane
decentemente a spasso.
Bisogno ho d'un bracciere.
Sarà mio cavaliere.

Oh! questo poi, scusatemi,
oh, questo non può star.

Non può star? Perché?

Perché nol voglio.

Non lo volete?

No.

Idolo mio, vi supplico, scordar questa parola.

TRACK 4

NORINA: I want. I want. By your rule,
I alone will say it.
Everyone here must obey.
I alone command.

Voglio, per vostra regola,
voglio, lo dico io sola;
tutti obbedir qui devono,
io sola ho a comandar.

As you listen along, write your comments/notes below. Be as specific as possible in identifying qualities in the music, in the sound of the Italian dialogue, and in the meaning, that gives this scene its particular effect.

Music

Dialogue

Overall meaning and effect of scene

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY SHEET

Comedic Blueprint

The Plan in Action (continued)

TRACK 5 (ACT III)

DON PASQUALE: Ah! It's all over, Don Pasquale.
You've really blown it this time!
Nothing is left for you
but to go and drown yourself.

Ah! è finita, Don Pasquale,
hai bel romperti la testa!
Altro affare non ti resta
che d'andarti ad affogar.

TRACK 6

NORINA: It's a tough lesson,
but we want it to work.
We have to make sure
the project succeeds.

È durezza la lezione,
ma ci vuole a far l'effetto.
Or bisogna del progetto
la riuscita assicurar.

TRACK 7

NORINA: I'm leaving then.

Parto dunque.

DON PASQUALE: Fine then, leave. But don't ever come back.

Parta pure. Ma non faccia più ritorno.

As you listen along, write your comments/notes below. Be as specific as possible in identifying qualities in the music, in the sound of the Italian dialogue, and in the meaning, that gives this scene its particular effect.

Music

Dialogue

Overall meaning and effect of scene

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY SHEET

Comedic Blueprint

The Climax

TRACK 8 (ACT III)

DON PASQUALE: Run and get Norina,
and I'll marry you right now.

MALATESTA: You needn't go far. The bride is here.

DON PASQUALE: What? Explain yourself!

MALATESTA: This is Norina.

DON PASQUALE: This? Norina? I'm betrayed!
And Sofronia?

MALATESTA: Still in the convent.

DON PASQUALE: And the wedding?

MALATESTA: I had the idea of
using an open net as
a way of closing the trap over you.
The rest of the little story isn't clear.

DON PASQUALE: Ah, you tricksters!
(It can't be true! I'm thanking Heaven!)
To deceive me like that! You deserve...

Corri a prender Norina,
e d'unirvi io m'impegno in sul momento,

Senz'andar lungi la sposa è presta,

Come? Spiegatevi...

Norina è questa.

Quella?... Norina?... Che tradimento!
Dunque Sofronia?...

Dura in convento.

E il matrimonio?...

Fu un mio pensiero
stringervi in nodi di nullo effetto,
il modo a torvi di farne un vero.
È chiaro il resto del romanzetto.

Ah bricconissimi...
(Vero non parmi! Ciel ti ringrazio!)
Così ingannarmi! Meritereste...

As you listen along, write your comments/notes below. Be as specific as possible in identifying qualities in the music, in the sound of the Italian dialogue, and in the meaning, that gives this scene its particular effect.

Music

Dialogue

Overall meaning and effect of scene

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY SHEET

Comedic Blueprint

The Resolution

TRACK 9 (ACT III)

NORINA: The moral of all this
is easy enough to find.
I'll say it quickly
if you want to hear.
It's stupid to get married
in old age—
you're looking for lots of misery
and suffering.

La moral di tutto questo
è assai facil trovarsi.
Ve la dico presto presto
se vi piace d'ascoltar.
Ben è scemo di cervello
chi s'ammoglia in vecchia età;
va a cercar col campanello
noie e doglie in quantità.

TRACK 10

DON PASQUALE: The moral is very well
applied to me.
You are very clever, you little scamp,
you've shown me how things really are.

La morale è molto bella
applicarla a me si sta.
Sei pur fina, o bricconcella,
m'hai servito come va.

MALATESTA AND ERNESTO: The moral is very well applied
to Don Pasquale.
This dear little scamp
is far wiser than we know.

La morale è molto bella,
Don Pasqual l'applicherà.
Quella cara bricconcella
lunga più di noi la sa.

As you listen along, write your comments/notes below. Be as specific as possible in identifying qualities in the music, in the sound of the Italian dialogue, and in the meaning, that gives this scene its particular effect.

Music

Dialogue

Overall meaning and effect of scene

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Patter Singing

TRACKS 11 AND 12 (ACT III)

DON PASQUALE: You will see
if I use tricks and secrets,
tender smiles,
sighs and tears.
I want to take
my revenge.
You are now in my trap
and you will not escape.

MALATESTA: In vain, he keeps coming up
with projects and plans.
Doesn't he know he's building
castles in the air?
The simpleton
can't see
he's setting a trap
for himself.

DON PASQUALE: My revenge.

MALATESTA: He's locked in a cage. He can't escape.

DON PASQUALE: I'll make them pay all at once.

Vedrai se giovino
raggiri e cabale,
sorrisi teneri,
sospiri e lagrime.
Or voglio prendere
la mia rivincita
sei nella trappola
v'hai da restar.

Invano accumula
progetti e calcoli;
non sa che fabbrica
castelli in aria;
non vede il semplice
che nella trappola
da sé medesimo
si va a gettar.

La mia vendetta.

È chiuso in gabbia, non può scappar.

Tutte in un punto l'hai da scontar.

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
DON PASQUALE

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Secret Messages

TRACK 13

(instrumental)

TRACK 14 (ACT III)

ERNESTO: How lovely is a mid-April night—
the sky is blue, the moon clear and bright.

Com'è gentil la notte a mezzo april!
È azzurro il ciel, la luna è senza vel.

TRACKS 15 AND 16

(instrumental)

TRACK 17 (ACT I)

NORINA: I also know the magic power
of a glance in the right time and place;
I also know how hearts
can burn with a slow fire.

So anch'io la virtù magica
d'un guardo a tempo e loco,
so anch'io come si bruciano
i cori a lento fuoco.

TRACK 18

(instrumental)

THE MET: LIVE IN HD
DON PASQUALE

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Lessons Not in Books

TRACK 19 (ACT I)

NORINA: "That look pierced
the knight's heart;
he fell to his knees and said,
'I am your knight!'
And in that look there was
so much of the taste of paradise
that Sir Richard,
entirely conquered by love,
swore that his thoughts
would never turn to another."

"Quel guardo il cavaliere
in mezzo al cor trafisse
piegò il ginocchio e disse:
'son vostro cavalier!'
E tanto era in quel guardo
sapor di paradiso,
che il cavalier Riccardo,
tutto d'amor conquiso,
giurò che ad altra mai
non volgeria il pensier."

TRACK 20

(Norina's Wordless Response)

TRACK 21

I also know the magic power
of a glance in the right time and place;
I also know how hearts can burn
with a slow fire.
I also know the effect
of a quick smile,
of lying tears,
of a sudden weakness.

So anch'io la virtù magica
d'un guardo a tempo e loco,
so anch'io come si bruciano
i cori a lento fuoco,
d'un breve sorrisetto
conosco anch'io l'effetto,
di menzognera lagrima,
d'un subito languor.

TRACK 22

I know the thousand types
of fraudulent love,
the charms, and the simple arts
of luring a heart.

Conosco i mille modi
dell'amorose frodi,
i vezzi, e l'arti facili
per adescare un cor.

TRACK 23

I also know the effect
of a quick smile—
I know, I know,
about sudden weakness.

D'un breve sorrisetto
conosco anch'io l'effetto,
conosco, conosco,
d'un subito languor.

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

Lessons Not in Books (continued)

TRACK 24

NORINA: I also know the magic power
that inspires love.
I know the effect—yes, yes—
that inspires love.

So anch'io la virtù magica
Per ispirare amor
conosco l'effetto, sì, sì
per ispirare amor.

TRACK 25

NORINA: I have a strange head.
I'm quick, and lively.
I love to shine.
I love to kid around.
If I become angry,
I seldom show it,
but anyway, my anger
quickly changes to laughter.
I have a strange head,
but an excellent heart,
but an excellent heart, ah!

Ho la testa bizzarra;
son pronta, vivace,
brillare mi piace,
mi piace scherzar.
Se monto in furore
di rado sto al segno,
ma in riso lo sdegno
fo presto a cangiar.
Ho la testa bizzarra,
Ma cuore eccellente,
Ma cuore eccellente, ah!

TRACK 26

(Reprise of cabaletta, see Tracks 21–25)

Don Pasquale: My Highs & Lows

NOVEMBER 13, 2010

CONDUCTED BY JAMES LEVINE

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
ANNA NETREBKO AS NORINA	* * * * *	
MATTHEW POLENZANI AS ERNESTO	* * * * *	
MARIUSZ KWIECIEN AS MALATESTA	* * * * *	
JOHN DEL CARLO AS DON PASQUALE	* * * * *	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
DON PASQUALE DECIDES TO GET MARRIED MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ERNESTO HEARS THE NEWS MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
MALATESTA PREPARES NORINA FOR HER PART MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ERNESTO MOVES OUT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
DON PASQUALE MEETS HIS BRIDE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ERNESTO WITNESSES THE WEDDING CONTRACT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SOFRONIA'S CHANGE OF STYLE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SOFRONIA REDECORATES MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
SOFRONIA AND DON PASQUALE FIGHT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
DON PASQUALE AND MALATESTA MAKE A PLAN MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
DON PASQUALE LEARNS HIS LESSON MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5