

The Pescadero Opera Society presents

Don Giovanni



**Music by
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

**Libretto by
Lorenzo da Ponte**

Opera in Two Acts

**Setting: Seville, Spain
Time: In the 1600s**

Characters

Don Giovanni (baritone)..... Ruggero Raimondi
Don Pedro, The Commendatore (bass).....John Macurdy
Donna Anna, his daughter (soprano)..... Edda Moser
Don Ottavio, her betrothed (tenor).....Kenneth Riegel
Donna Elvira, a woman scorned (soprano)..... Kiri Te Kanawa
Leporello, Don Giovanni's servant (bass)..... José Van Dam
Zerlina, a peasant girl (soprano)..... Teresa Berganza
Masetto, betrothed to Zerlina (tenor)..... Malcolm King
A Valet in Black..... Eric Adjani

Conducted by Lorin Maazel
with the Orchestra and Chorus of the Paris Opera

Première performance at Gräfllich Nöstitz'sches Nationaltheater in Prague
October 29, 1787

Synopsis

Act I

The garden of the Commendatore



Don Giovanni's servant, Leporello, is keeping watch outside the Commendatore's house. He complains that he no longer wishes to work for Don Giovanni, a dissolute nobleman, since the work is so bad. Don Giovanni suddenly emerges with an enraged Donna Anna pursuing him. It turns out that Don Giovanni has made a failed attempt to seduce her and she is threatening to call the guards. Her father, the Commendatore, finds Don Giovanni first, however, and challenges him to a duel. Don Giovanni quickly slays the Commendatore and flees with Leporello. Donna Anna faints from the shock of her dead father, but Don Ottavio, her betrothed, revives her and promises to avenge her father's murder.

Don Giovanni, undeterred by his failed attempt with Donna Anna, is always looking for more women to "conquer." He quickly finds a woman in mourning and raging against the man who loved and then abandoned her. He makes himself known to the poor woman, Donna Elvira, but it turns out that it was actually Giovanni himself who was the faithless lover she was so upset about. Giovanni orders Leporello to reveal to Donna Elvira the "truth" about Giovanni's life. While Leporello shows Elvira the shockingly huge list of Giovanni's sexual conquests Giovanni makes his escape.



Giovanni soon finds the perfect opportunity for his next conquest at a peasant wedding. Zerlina and Masetto have just been married, but Giovanni manages to separate the couple and lure Zerlina away with promises of love and marriage. At the same time he is able to keep Masetto away with threats. Just as Zerlina is about to succumb to Giovanni's charm, Donna Elvira interferes and leads the young bride away from Giovanni.



Donna Anna (still in mourning for her father) with her betrothed, Ottavio, both arrive in search of Giovanni, the man who killed her father. However, neither recognize him when they see him so he cleverly disguises himself as an innocent gentleman and freely offers to help them in their search. Donna Elvira again interferes with his plan and ruins Giovanni's cover by revealing to Zerlina his notorious reputation. After Giovanni and Donna Elvira leave Donna Anna suddenly recognizes Giovanni's voice and realizes that he was indeed the one who had killed her father.

After failing to seduce Zerlina, Don Giovanni plans a party to lure in not only Zerlina, but every peasant woman in the area, to add to his catalog of conquests. Zerlina and Masetto also attend the party, though Masetto remains suspicious of his wife's encounter with Giovanni. Donna Anna, Don Ottavio, and Donna Elvira arrive at the party disguised in masks, with plans to expose Don Giovanni. Their opportunity soon arrives when Giovanni suddenly forces Zerlina into a room. She lets out a scream and Masetto rushes into the room to her rescue. To save his reputation, Giovanni tries to blame it on Leporello, his servant, but no one is fooled. They assert that Don Giovanni will eventually be punished by Heaven for his sinful ways.

Act II

Outside Elvira's house



Zerlina

Don Giovanni, despite having failed twice at seducing Zerlina, remains obsessed with her. Leporello is disgusted with the whole situation and threatens to leave, but Giovanni bribes him with gold to remain in his service. He and Leporella exchange clothes so that Giovanni can go in disguise. When Donna Elvira comes to her window, Giovanni appears to serenade her, but he places Leporello in there instead. Elvira, believing that Giovanni loves her again, goes off with the disguised Leporello.

Giovanni, meanwhile, runs into a band of angry peasants Masetto has organized to kill him. Giovanni, pretending that he is Leporello, tells the peasants how much he hates his master, and even tells them where he can be found. When the peasants leave to search for him, Giovanni disarms Masetto and beats him up. Zerlina finds Masetto after Giovanni flees and tries to console him. Eventually Donna Anna, Don Ottavio, Zerlina and Masetto find the disguised Leporello with Elvira, but are so shocked when they discover it is really Leporello that he manages to escape.

Leporello meets up with Giovanni in an old graveyard. Giovanni relates a despicable tale of trying to seduce an old girlfriend of Leporello's and laughs at his servant's misery. The laughter awakens the spirit of the Commendatore, who threatens Giovanni with divine wrath. Giovanni is not the least bit shaken and, standing in front of the Commendatore's statue, invites him to dinner.

While Giovanni is sitting down to dinner Donna Elvira tells his that she forgives him and asks him to renounce his philandering ways. Giovanni only mocks her. As Elvira leaves in disgust she encounters the statue of the Commendatore and shrieks in horror and flees. Leporello too sees the statue outside the house, which sends him into a panic. Don Giovanni remains unshaken, even as the statue approaches him, inviting him to dinner in the spirit world. Giovanni steadfastly agrees to the invitation and shakes the statue's hand as a sign of the bargain. An icy chill runs through his body, and he is suddenly aware of the doom that awaits him. He boldly refuses warnings to repent, even in the face of death. Flames engulf his house, and Don Giovanni sinks into a flaming abyss which suddenly opens beneath him.

Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, Don Ottavio, Zerlina and Masetto find the badly shaken Leporello, who relates the ghastly death of Giovanni. Donna Anna and Don Ottavio decide to postpone their marriage for one more year. Zerlina and Masetto plan to go to a friend's house for dinner. Donna Elvira decides to spend her life in a nunnery, and Leporello plans to go to a tavern to find a new and better master.



The remaining cast warn against leading a life such as Giovanni's, with its ultimate punishment. Among the castle ruins they recite the moral of the story: "As you live, so shall you die."

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Born: January 27, 1756 in Salzburg, Austria; Died: December 5, 1791 in Vienna, Austria



Born to Leopold and Anna Maria Pertl, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart was one of two surviving children. When Wolfgang was four (as noted by his father in his sister's music book), he was playing the same pieces as his sister, Maria Anna, who was a gifted keyboard player. At the age of five, he wrote a miniature andante and allegro. In 1762, Leopold took Wolfgang and Maria Anna on tour throughout Vienna performing for nobles and ambassadors. Later in 1763, Leopold took Wolfgang and Maria Anna on a three-and-a-half year tour throughout Germany, France, England, Switzerland, and other countries.

Amid the many tours, Mozart wrote music for a number of occasions. In 1770, Mozart (only 14) was commissioned to write an opera (*Mitridate, re di Ponto*) by that December. He began work on the opera in October and by December 26, after eight rehearsals, the show was performed. The show, which included several ballets from other composers, lasted six hours. To much of Leopold's surprise, the opera was a huge success and went on to perform 22 more times.

In 1777 Mozart left Salzburg with his mother to search for a higher paying job. His travels led him to Paris, where unfortunately, his mother became deathly ill. Mozart's efforts to find a better job were unfruitful. He returned home two years later and continued working in the court as an organist with accompanying duties, rather than as a violinist. Mozart was offered an increase in salary and generous leave.

After the successful premier of the opera *Idomenée* in 1781 in Munich, Mozart returned to Salzburg. Wanting to be released from his job as court organist, Mozart met with the archbishop. In March of 1781, Mozart was finally released from his duties and began working freelance. A year later, Mozart gave his first public concert consisting entirely of his own compositions.

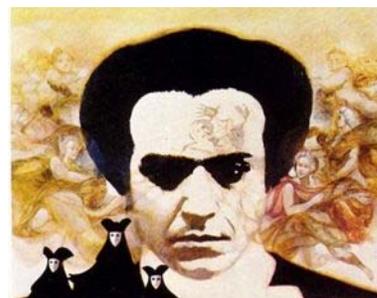
Mozart married Constanze Weber in July of 1782, despite his father's constant disapprovals. As Mozart's compositions flourished, his debts did too; money always seemed a bit tight. In 1787, Mozart's father, Leopold, died. The affects of his father's death was devastating to Mozart, and can be seen in a lull in new compositions. Four years later in 1791, Mozart died of military fever, at the age of thirty-five. Mozart was buried with little ceremony in a suburb of Vienna, in an unmarked grave, in accordance with prevailing custom.

Don Giovanni

"The best opera ever written" — that is what Richard Wagner said about *Don Giovanni*. Many music critics and composers alike consider *Don Giovanni* to be Mozart's operatic masterpiece — a lot of fun to watch and the music is spectacular, high-spirited, impassioned and dramatic.

The story of Don Juan ("Don Giovanni") had been tried in numerous operas before Mozart's time, though none of them managed to be successful, and none equal to the score Mozart produced. Many previous attempts either were mediocre, artificial or just plainly offended people.

The original title of the opera was: *Il Dissoluto Punito, ossia il Don Giovanni* ("The Dissolute Punished, namely Don Giovanni"). The work was originally characterized as an opera buffa, or drama giocoso (playful drama), but Mozart's noble setting lifted it out of that category.



Mozart was especially lucky to get Lorenzo da Ponte, a court librettist of high reputation (and a talented Jew who had the whim of passing for a priest), to produce the libretto for *Don Giovanni*. He adapted the libretto from *Le Festin de Pierre*, Molière's version of the old Spanish tale, in which the statue of a murdered man accepts an insolent invitation to dine with his murderer, appearing at the dinner and dragging him down to Hell. Da Ponte, however, also made free use of *Il Convitato di Pietra* ("The Stone-Guest"), a libretto written by the Italian theatrical poet Bertati for the composer Giuseppe Gazzaniga.

It is well known that the overture of *Don Giovanni* was written almost on the eve of the first performance. Mozart was spending a pleasant evening with some friends, when one of them said to him, "Tomorrow the first performance of *Don Giovanni* will take place, and you have not yet composed the overture!" Mozart, pretending to get nervous about it, withdrew to his room, where he began to compose around midnight. Whenever he grew sleepy, his wife, who was by his side, entertained him with stories to keep him awake. It is said that it took him only three hours to produce this overture.

The next evening, a little before the curtain rose, the copyists finished transcribing the parts for the orchestra. Hardly had they brought the sheets, still wet, to the theater, when Mozart, greeted by enthusiastic applause, entered the orchestra and took his seat at the piano. Although the musicians had not had time to rehearse the overture, they played it with such precision that the audience broke out into fresh applause. As the curtain rose, and Leporello came forward to sing his solo, Mozart laughingly whispered to the musicians near him, "Some notes fell under the stands, but it went well."

Don Giovanni was presented for the first time in Prague on October 29, 1787, because Mozart, satisfied with the manner in which Bondini's troupe had sung his *Marriage of Figaro* a little more than a year before, had agreed to write another work for the same house. There was an enormous audience, and the applause, cordial from the first was, towards the end, renewed with increased enthusiasm. Later, when the opera was produced at Vienna it was not a success, whether owing to agitators against Mozart, or poor performance, or some other mysterious reason. It was not until some years had gone by that it won its way into general public favor.

Mozart had agreed to hand over the finished score in time for the autumn season of 1787, for the sum of one hundred ducats (\$240). Unfortunately there were no royalties back then, so Mozart didn't receive a cent from the proceeds.

It is much to be regretted that *Don Giovanni* is not heard more often. Perhaps its cast is too exacting for the modern manager, since it demands three great sopranos, a basso, and a powerful baritone.

Don Giovanni, the Video (1979)

Starring Ruggero Raimondi and Kiri Te Kanawa; conducted by Lorin Maazel



Joseph Losey's *Don Giovanni* is considered to be one of the most beautiful opera videos ever produced. It was filmed on location in Vicenza, Italy, adding another dimension to the opera that takes it to another level. The lavish production is stunning to look at, with great art direction and cinematography, a very attractive cast, and of course, Mozart's score, which is considered his most sublime masterpiece. Raimondi is at the height of his career and the finest Don Juan in anyone's memory. He is the perfect Don Giovanni — totally believable and true to Mozart's characterization. Kiri Te Kanawa is the perfect Donna Elvira.