



Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Don Pasquale: A Masterful Blend of Humor and Humanity

Opera House of Zurich, 03.06.2025 [ENA]

The Opera House of Zürich's 2025 production of Gaetano Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* emerges as a triumphant blend of comedic brilliance and poignant introspection. Under the astute direction of Christof Loy and the vibrant baton of conductor Iván López-Reynoso, this rendition breathes new life into the classic opera buffa, offering audiences an experience that is both entertaining and emotionally resonant.

Christof Loy's direction brings a contemporary sensibility to Donizetti's 1843 masterpiece. Eschewing overt slapstick, Loy delves into the characters' psyches, revealing the vulnerabilities and desires that drive their actions. This approach transforms the opera into a "dramma buffo" that balances humor with genuine human emotion. The minimalist set design by Johannes Leiacker, complemented by Barbara Drosihn's elegant costumes and Franck Evin's nuanced lighting, creates a versatile backdrop that shifts seamlessly between the opera's comedic and dramatic moments.

The cast assembled for this production delivers performances that are both vocally impressive and dramatically compelling. Pietro Spagnoli as Don Pasquale: Spagnoli portrays the titular character with a blend of comedic timing and emotional depth. His baritone voice navigates the intricate score with ease, capturing Pasquale's transformation from a self-assured bachelor to a man humbled by love and deception. Olga Peretyatko as Norina: Peretyatko's soprano is both agile and expressive, perfectly suited to Norina's spirited character. Her performance balances the character's mischievousness with moments of genuine empathy, particularly as she recognizes the impact of her actions on Don Pasquale.

Konstantin Shushakov as Dr. Malatesta: Sempey's baritone brings a charismatic presence to the scheming doctor. His interactions with both Pasquale and Norina are marked by sharp wit and dynamic energy, particularly in the rapid-fire duet "Cheti, cheti, immantimente," which showcases his vocal dexterity and comedic flair. Mingjie Lei as Ernesto: Owens delivers a heartfelt performance as the lovelorn nephew. His tenor voice soars in arias like "Com'è gentil," conveying Ernesto's romantic idealism and emotional vulnerability.

The supporting cast, including Samson Setu (Carlotto), R. A. Güther (Sergio), David Földszin (Ugo), and Ursula Deuker (Clara), contribute to the production's overall success, each bringing their characters to life with enthusiasm and precision. Conductor Iván López-Reynoso leads the Philharmonia Zürich with a keen understanding of Donizetti's nuanced score. His interpretation emphasizes the opera's rhythmic vitality and

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melodic richness, ensuring that the orchestra complements the singers without overpowering them. The ensemble's crisp articulation and dynamic range enhance the production's emotional impact, from the buoyant overture to the tender final scenes.

This Don Pasquale stands out not only for its musical and theatrical excellence but also for its ability to connect with contemporary audiences. By highlighting the characters' emotional journeys and moral complexities, the production invites viewers to reflect on themes of love, deception, and personal growth. The balance of humor and pathos ensures that the opera remains engaging and thought-provoking throughout. The 2025 staging of Don Pasquale is a testament to the enduring relevance of Donizetti's work. Through insightful direction, outstanding performances, and exceptional musical leadership, the production offers a fresh perspective on a beloved classic. It is a must-see for opera enthusiasts and newcomers alike.

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