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Rehearsals underway ahead of world premiere staging of ‘lost’ opera

Rehearsals for the world premiere staging of Gaetano Donizetti’s ‘lost’ opera, ‘Dalinda’, at the Baxter Theatre from 4 to 8 September 2024 are well underway. The University of Cape Town (UCT) Opera School’s performance company, [Opera UCT](#), will present the fully staged performances.

‘Dalinda’, an opera thought to be lost to history, was rediscovered in 2019 and meticulously reconstructed. At first thought to be yet another version of Donizetti’s famous opera, ‘Lucrezia Borgia,’ (he often copied his own work), examination of the score showed that ‘Dalinda’ is an opera in its own right. As was common in 19th century Italy, however, both works faced repeated rejections by the censors in Naples, and in the process, the manuscript of ‘Dalinda’ was lost.

Although ‘Dalinda’ was given a concert presentation by the Berlin Operngruppe at the Konzerthaus in Berlin, Germany in May 2023, the Opera UCT production, under the baton of its director Professor Jeremy Silver, marks the first full-scale performance and as such, is a significant milestone in the operatic world.

Silver, who is globally recognised for conducting lesser-known Donizetti masterpieces, was selected by Ambra Sorrentino of Opera Co-Pro to bring the full masterpiece to life. He said: "We are incredibly excited and deeply grateful to have been selected to present the [first full staging](#) of Donizetti’s ‘Dalinda.’ This performance is not only an honour for us as an opera company, but for the country too, and something we are hoping to share with opera lovers and newcomers alike who will appreciate the story, as much as the historic event."

In looking to share this impressive work, Opera UCT have also made the decision to offer free seating to all under 18s. This, Silver hopes, will also encourage a following and appreciation for opera itself.

‘Dalinda,’ which was censored at the time of its composition in Naples in 1838, is a deeply evocative exploration of human emotion and ‘truth’ – whether to tell and what to tell – and the consequences. Unusual for a 19th century work, it also offers a remarkably detailed interplay between the characters. Exploring the tension between the private and public life of Dalinda, a mother and political leader, this opera is a timely story for now with lessons for all of us.

Silver remarks: "As artists we have never shied away from reality and the relevance of opera, even in a modern world, and its ability to tell the human story in a way that is non-threatening to the audience yet allows the storyteller to explore sometimes very hidden prejudices and emotions in a legitimate fashion."

Bringing the rediscovered score to life, this production will feature a stellar cast of talented singers, including Molly Dzagare, Luvo Maranti and Violina Anguelov along with the prowess of the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra (CPO). The production will be led by Italian director, William Costabile Cisco, together with Bulgarian costume designer, Leticia Parvoleta Ivanova, and Cape Town's veteran set designer, Michael Mitchell.

[Tickets](#) for this historic premiere are expected to sell quickly. Patrons are encouraged to secure their seats early to witness this once-in-a-lifetime event. For ticket information and reservations, please visit [Webtickets](#) or contact the Baxter Theatre Box Office at 021 685 7880.

This world premiere is not only a significant cultural event for Cape Town but also a landmark moment in the global opera community. Donizetti's 'Dalinda' promises to captivate audiences with its timeless beauty and emotional depth, leaving a lasting impression on all who attend.

Although written nearly two centuries ago, 'Dalinda' is a timely reminder of all that we are, how our environment shapes us, and our choices to exercise free will...or not. Complicated yet compelling, 'Dalinda' is a must experience.



Prof Jeremy Silver, director of Opera UCT.

Photo: Supplied

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