



# Gioachino Rossini

Composer of the Week



Gioachino Rossini  
(1792-1868)





Born in Pesaro,  
Italy on 29<sup>th</sup>  
February, 1792



Died in Paris,  
France on 13<sup>th</sup>  
November, 1868



Rossini lived from 1792 - 1868

Have you worked out how old Rossini was when he died?

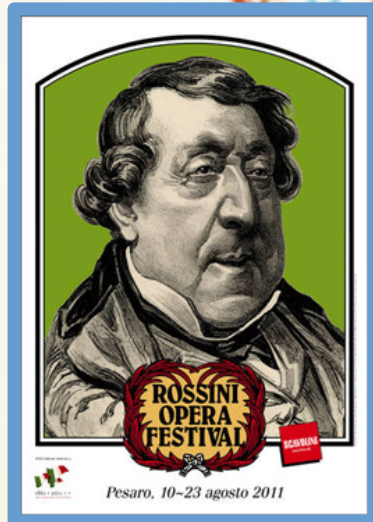
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However, Rossini was born in a Leap Year, on 29<sup>th</sup> February, meaning he only had a birthday **every four years.**

This means that Rossini actually only celebrated his 19<sup>th</sup> birthday a few months before his death.

Rossini is known as one of the most famous Italian **Opera** Composers to have lived.

He is mainly known for his Comic Operas.



His operas are very popular today and are performed as regularly as those of **Mozart, Verdi** and **Puccini**.



**Opera** is a form of theatre where all the drama is conveyed through music. The dramatic roles are all taken by singers who are accompanied by an orchestra who play throughout. Usually there is a chorus and, sometimes, some dancers too. There is often dramatic scenery and lavish costumes.

Some operas use very serious stories from history, others from famous plays – many set Shakespearean plays. Some operas are very sad, Rossini, however became famous for his Comic Operas.



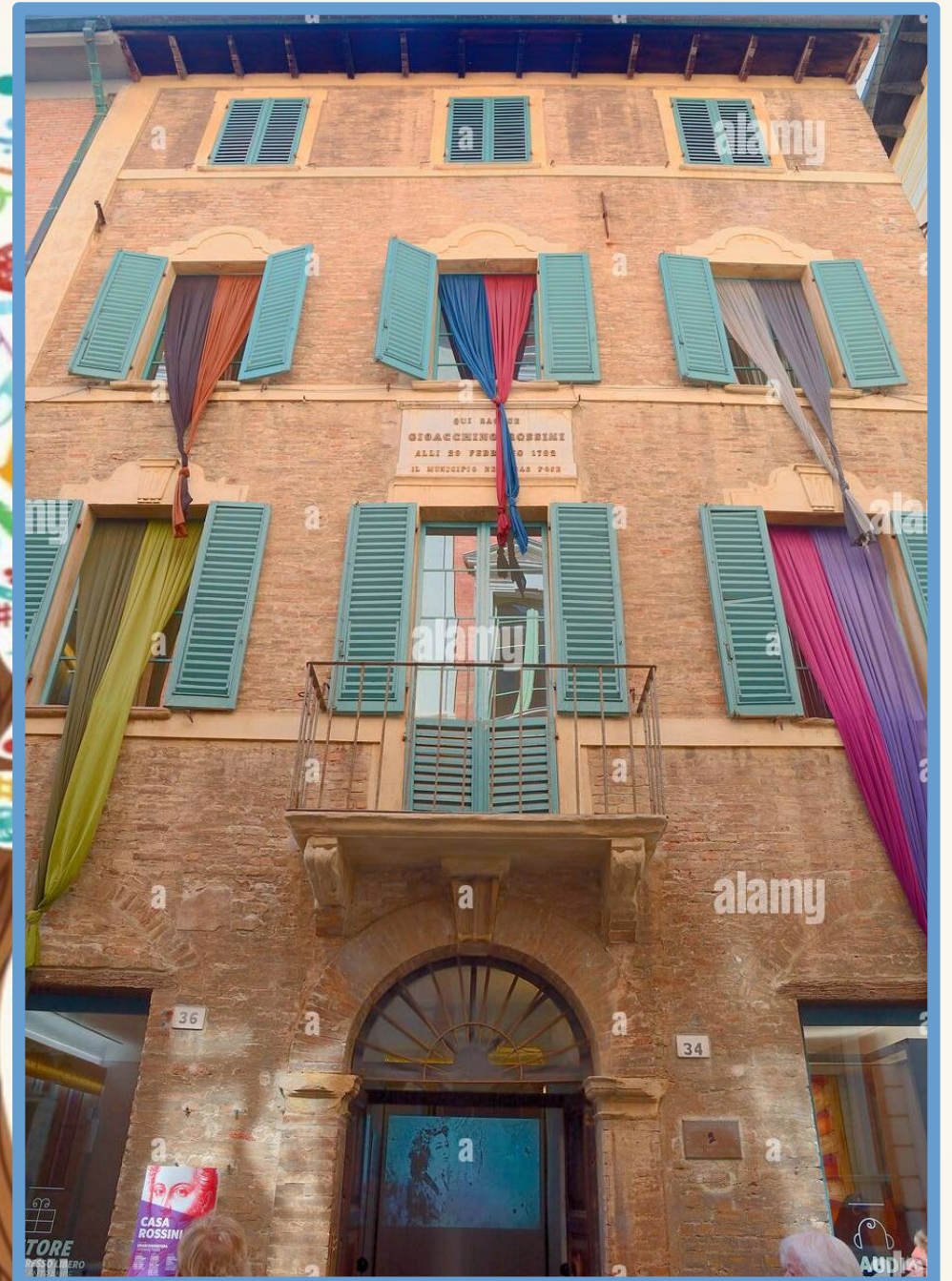


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Rossini was born in Pesaro, Italy. His father was a trumpeter and his mother a singer, so the young Rossini spent much of his childhood in the theatre.



It is said that Rossini was a lazy student but music came easily to him and his first compositions, a set of 6 Sonatas for stringed instruments, were composed at the age of 12.

He was very interested in the works of **Haydn** and **Mozart**.

As they were German, they were not fashionable in Italy at the time but Rossini studied their works in detail.



Rossini became fed up with the singers of the day who thought they were more important than the composers. During the time of **Handel** it was customary for the singers to decorate the musical tune – they did this to show how accomplished they were - and some of them did this so much that it was almost impossible to make out what the original tune was.

Listen to this aria **Da Tempeste** (The Storm) from the opera **Julius Caesar** by **Handel**, notice how decorated the tune is, this was all devised by the singer. The original melody is unrecognisable.



It was also the done thing for the most famous singers – the **prima donna's** - to bring their own favourite **arias** (songs), usually written by a completely different composer, and add them into the opera, even if they didn't fit in with the music or the story.

Rossini decided that this wasn't going to happen in his operas so he wrote **arias** (songs) that had decorated vocal lines. This was meant to stop the singers using their own decorations.





Rossini became very successful.

He wrote 39 operas in all.

Between 1810-1823 he wrote 34 operas for the Italian stage.

He moved to Paris in 1824 and composed four other operas.

Then he stopped!

For the last 40 years of his life he only composed a few works and NO OPERAS.

Writing so many operas in such a short time meant that Rossini often used a similar formula for writing his works.

He became known for using certain musical effects.

Can you guess which effect Rossini is using here, in the overture to his opera **The Thieving Magpie**?

Did you hear the music beginning quietly and getting gradually louder?

What is this called?

**Crescendo**



Most of the arias in Rossini's operas have a slow first section, followed by a fast second section with a crescendo towards the end. Listen to this aria from Rossini's most famous opera, **The Barber of Seville**. **Figaro** is the barber and everyone in Seville comes to his shop to ask his advice or tell him their problems. They keep on calling him....

By the way, this Figaro is the same one as the Figaro that appears in Mozart's opera **The Marriage of Figaro**. Rossini's story takes place before Figaro's marriage however.



Rossini's operas were not all about formulas. He made the orchestra much more significant. Instead of being there just to accompany the singers, he often gave the orchestra its own central role. Rossini wrote some beautiful music for the orchestra, making it important in its own right.

Listen to the **Storm** scene from **The Barber of Seville**.

Rossini was only 29 when this opera was composed and it took him only three weeks.





No one knows for certain why Rossini stopped composing operas when he was still comparatively young. Music had made him very rich, unlike many of his predecessors, and he enjoyed many of the good things in life – especially eating good food.

He lived in Paris, which to this day, has a reputation for the best food, and some of the greatest chefs in the world cooked dishes for Rossini. One of the most famous dishes is called **Tournados Rossini.**





Tournados Rossini is steak, foie gras (duck livers) and Truffles (a kind of mushroom).

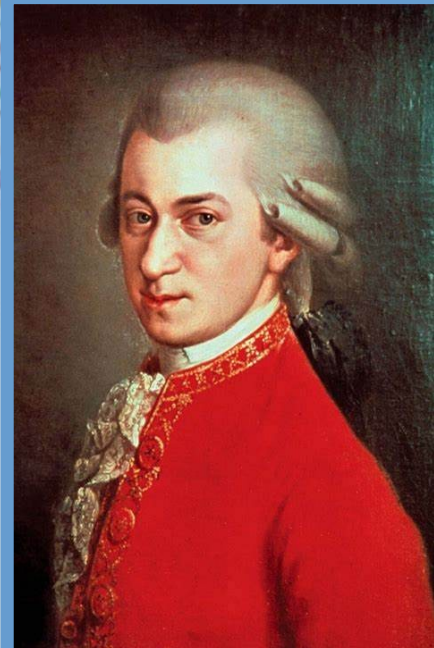
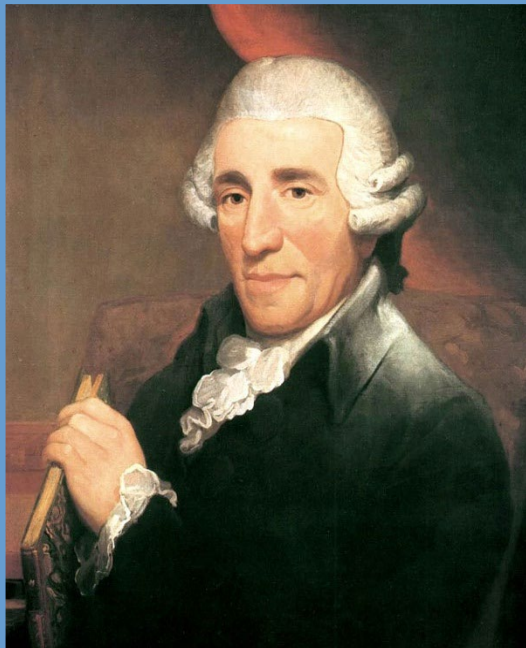
Some say it was devised at the Café Anglais in Paris by Chef Adolphe Dugléré, who Rossini called, '*the Mozart of the kitchen*'.





Rossini's home in Paris and his cottage in Passy became known as somewhere where there would be good food, excellent company and interesting conversation. Rossini would always have interesting things to say...

*"I take Beethoven twice a week, Haydn four times, but Mozart every day... Mozart is always adorable."*





When he died,  
over four  
thousand  
people came to  
his funeral.

He was buried in  
this tomb at the  
Père Lachaise  
Cemetery in  
Paris.





Some years later Rossini's body was moved to the Basilica di Santa Croce in Florence, Italy.





After his death he requested that some of his fortune be used to set up a home for retired musicians in Paris and also a Music College in Pesaro which still exists today. It is the centre for an annual Rossini Festival.



The language of music is common  
to all generations and nations; it is  
understood by everybody, since it is  
understood with the heart.

Gioachino Rossini

quote fancy

