



Gioachino Antonio Rossini (February 29, 1792 – November 13, 1868) is an Italian operatic composer, one of the great masters of the Italian opera *buffa*. Rossini was born in Pesaro, a town on the coast of Italy. His father, Giuseppe Rossini, played the horn in a local band and inspected slaughterhouses to earn extra money for his family. His mother, Anna, was a singer and the daughter of a baker. Rossini's mother and father began to teach him music at a very early age. By age six, Rossini was playing the triangle in a local band, along with his father. Soon after, Rossini was apprenticed to a smith. He found a much needed master in Angelo Tesei who taught him to sight-read, play the piano, and sing solos in church at the age of ten. When he was just thirteen, he played at the stage of the Commune, in Camilla. This would be his only public performance as a singer. As a talented horn player, Rossini followed in the footsteps of his father. Rossini was admitted to the class of Padre P. S. Mattei in 1807. He also began studying with Cavedagni at the Conservatorio of Bologna. He became a talented cello player, but was stifled by Mattei's severe views on study. Rossini sought to study at a freer school. His talent in orchestral

performance is related to the strict teachings he learned from Mattei as well as knowledge acquired from independent work. While studying in Bologna, he was known as "the little German" because of his dedication to Mozart. Rossini's first opera was staged in Venice when he was just eighteen, at the guidance of the Marquis Cavalli. The opera was called *La Cambiale di Matrimonio*. Just two years before, Rossini was given a prize from the Conservatorio of Bologna for his first cantata. He made several operas from 1810 to 1813 but the success of these works was dwarfed by the huge success of his opera *Tancredi*. Rossini married the singer Isabella Colbran in 1822. Later that same year, he produced his opera *Cenerentola* in Vienna; his *Zelmira* was also performed at this venue years earlier. Following these productions, Rossini returned to Bologna where he had grown up and first studied music. He didn't stay there for long. After receiving an invitation from Prince Metternich, Rossini left for Verona. Prince Metternich wanted Rossini to assist him in reinstituting "harmony" in the musical world. Rossini came back in time for the opening of the Congress in October of 1822. It was at the Congress that Rossini made friends with Dorothea Lieven and Chateaubriand.

In *La Cenerentola*, Prince Don Ramiro (who has changed places with his valet, Dandini), meets Cenerentola and they are instantly attracted to each other. When the Philosopher, Alidoro, later takes Cenerentola (dressed in magnificent clothing) to the palace, Dandini (still posing as the prince) tries to talk of love to her, but Cenerentola rejects him, saying that she is in love with his 'valet'. Ramiro, who has overheard this comment, is overjoyed, and immediately proposes to her, but Cenerentola says that he must first seek her out and then, if he still felt the same way, she would marry him. She gives him one of a matching pairs of bracelets, telling him to look for its companion on her right arm (she then leaves the palace). Ramiro ends the masquerade, and he and Dandini resume their true identities. The Prince then sets out on his quest - little realising that destiny, in the form of a violent thunderstorm, is about to take a hand in the affair.

Rossini composed *La Cenerentola* when he was 25 years old, following the success of *The Barber of Seville* the year before. *La Cenerentola*, which he completed in a period of three weeks, is considered to have some of his finest writing for solo voice and ensembles. Rossini saved some time by reusing an overture from *La gazetta* and part of an aria from *The Barber of Seville* and by enlisting a collaborator, Luca Agolini, who wrote the *secco* recitatives and three numbers (Alidoro's "*Vasto teatro e il mondo*", Clorida's "*Sventurata!*" and the chorus "*Ah, della bella incognita.*") The facsimile edition of the autograph has a different aria for Alidoro, "*Fa silenzio; odi un rumore*"; this seems to have been added by an anonymous hand for a 1818 production. For the 1820 revival in Rome Rossini wrote a bravura replacement, "*La del ciel nel l'arcanno profondo*". The light, energetic overture has been in the standard repertoire since its premiere as *La Cenerentola*.