

L'elisir d'amore

melodramma giocoso in two acts

libretto **Felice Romani**

composer **Gaetano Donizetti**

based on libretto *Le philtre* written by Eugène Scribe

premiere Milano, Teatro alla Canobbiana, 12 maggio 1832

Act 1

A small Basque village at the end of the XVIII century.

In the farmyard belonging to the rich and capricious farmer Adina, the harvesters are resting after a day's work in the fields. Adina is sitting in a corner and reading the story of Tristan and Isolde. Watching her is Nemorino, a poor, young peasant who is extremely shy and hopelessly in love with her. Those surrounding Adina ask her to read out loud how Tristan managed to make the beautiful Isolde fall in love with him by using a magic potion. Suddenly the sound of drums can be heard: Belcore, sergeant of the local garri-son, arrives in search of soldiers for his regiment. Completely sure of himself, he wastes no time in courting Adina and even goes so far as to propose marriage. All Adina worries about, however, is making Nemorino understand how fickle and inconstant the heart really is. The sound of a trumpet announces the arrival of Dr. Dulcamara, a charlatan who awakes the interest of the naïve peasants by offering his amazing powers. One of them is particularly interested in his promises – Nemorino, who asks him if he also has Queen Isolde's magic love potion. Taking advantage of his innocence, Dulcamara sells him a bottle of Bordeaux for a gold coin – all the money Nemorino has – warning him that it will take twenty-four hours until it has any effect. This gives the swindler just enough time to get away from the village. With complete faith in the doctor's magic powers, Nemorino starts drinking from the bottle, and it is not long before he is so euphoric and sure of himself that he can even feign indifference to Adina. The latter, being accustomed to her normally melancholic but romantic admirer, is both astounded and piqued by this change in behaviour. The woman's desire for vengeance is so strong that she precipitously decides to accept Belcore's proposal, stating that the wedding must take place that very night (since the sergeant is to leave the following day). Convinced the magic potion will work, Nemorino begs her to postpone it for another twenty-four hours, until it has had time to take effect. Adina laughs at him and leaves with Belcore, while a frantic Nemorino is left behind and mocked by those present.



Act 2

Whilst the wedding preparations are underway on the farm, Dulcamara and Adina sing a barcarolle. The notary arrives with the marriage contract the bride and groom have to sign, but Adina declares that she will only sign it in the evening when Nemorino is present so she can have her revenge. Meanwhile, Nemorino is desperate because the potion has not yet had the desired effect. To make things worse, he has no more money so he cannot even buy another bottle. Making the most of the situation and wanting to get rid of him, Belcore offers him twenty scudi if he enlists as a soldier that very day. In truth, Nemorino has just become a very rich young man thanks to the inheritance left to him by an old uncle. While he is still completely unaware of this good news, the girls in the village are not, thanks to the zealous peasant girl Giannetta. Nemorino believes all this sudden attention is thanks to the magic potion (a fact that is also noted with great surprise by Dulcamara himself). Not even Adina knows of Nemorino's change in fortunes and reveals her true feelings for him by showing she is jealous. When Dulcamara tells her he sold Nemorino a magic potion, she is sure that he loves her, too. Nemorino slowly realises she feels the very same for him when he sees her with tears in her eyes, while all the other girls are courting him.

Adina herself buys him out of his contract with the army, thus giving him back his freedom. The path to happiness seems almost perfect but there is still one further obstacle to overcome – pride. At first, Adina pretends to be reluctant and refuses to admit her love for Nemorino and it is not until he threatens to leave for the front immediately in an outburst of rage does she give in, and tell him her true feelings. The young couple's happiness is matched only by Belcore's scorn. Dulcamara for his part celebrates the amazing powers of the potion while, *dulcis in fundo*, Nemorino learns that he has become the richest man in the village

