

Biography

Stijn Saveniers is a multifaceted conductor, cellist and researcher.

He is the artistic director of his own comic music theatre company, Volksopera Antwerp; as a cellist and regularly as a conductor he is a fixed member of the Antwerp based contemporary music ensemble HERMESensemble; and as a doctoral researcher he is connected to the Orpheus Institute Ghent (docARTES) and the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (ARIA), where he collaborated, apart from his ongoing research into musical comedy, in projects on Charles Lecocq, Pierre Suremont, La Malibran and Joseph Ryelandt.

Stijn Saveniers studied at the conservatories of Leuven (Belgium) and Maastricht (the Netherlands), where he obtained, both for cello (with Mirel Iancovici) and orchestral conducting (with Edmond Saveniers), his Master's degree with greatest distinction. In addition, he was awarded the Hustinckx Price in 2006. This triennial Maastricht price is awarded to the most promising young talent of a generation.

From then onwards he conducted a wide variety of productions: opera, operetta, ballet, symphonic and chamber orchestra repertoire, oratory, and contemporary music.

His special affinity with the human voice, in combination with an extensive experience as a pianist-répétiteur, led to his focus on the music theatre repertoire, with a sharp new *Fidelio* production with the Opera Compact company in the spring of 2022, and the creation of Annelies Van Parys's *Notwehr*, a new chamber opera commissioned by and premiered on the Venice Biennale 2022, as the most recent highlights.

It became, however, abundantly clear that the often-neglected comic repertoire would define his signature style, combining humor and music in a mix of spoken word, parlando singing and great lyrical moments. He conducted productions of *La Périchole*, *La Grande-duchesse de Gérolstein*, *Les Bavards & Mr. Choufleuri restera chez lui*, *La Fille du Tambour-Major* (Offenbach), *Der Vogelhändler* (Zeller), *Das Land des Lächelns* (Lehar), *Eine Nacht in Venedig*, *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss), *Clivia* (Dostal), *Les Mousquetaires au couvent* (Varney), *La Belle de Cadix* (Lopez).

His increasing sympathy for this genre made him discover many forgotten works, which became one of the reasons why, in 2014, he founded a comic music theatre company, Volksopera Antwerp. Volksopera aims at both preserving this genre musically — its specific musical needs, sound expression in particular — and innovating the presentation of it through confrontation with today's theatre paradigms.

Productions of Volksopera included *Le Docteur Miracle* (Lecocq), *Cox and Box & The Zoo* (Sullivan), *The Idea* (Holst), *Alles Schwindel* (Spoliansky), *L'île de Tulipatan* (Offenbach) and a research project with *The Bear* (Walton).

Coming up in the following months are the release of a new operetta and radio play, *Boze Bejaarden* (*Angry Elderly* – a collaboration between Wunderbaum, HERMESensemble and Volksopera) as well as a new *La Périchole* production. Continuous research work will lead to two critical publications of Belgian operettas in the spring of 2023.

Additional info, photos, audio and video examples can be found on
www.stijnsaveniers.com
www.volksopera.be
www.hermesensemble.be