

Biography

Stijn Saveniers is a versatile conductor, researcher, and coach.

He is the artistic director of *Volksopera*, an Antwerp-based initiative dedicated to comic opera; as a doctoral researcher, he is affiliated with the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp (ARIA) and the Orpheus Institute (docARTES), conducting research into the use of humour in theatrical music; within the Conservatoire's vocal department, he is appointed as a repertoire coach; and he is involved with the Study Centre for Flemish Music, where he contributes to the preparation of new critical editions. For nearly two decades, he was also a member of HERMESensemble, Antwerp's leading collective for contemporary music.

Saveniers studied at the conservatoires of Leuven and Maastricht, obtaining Master's degrees in cello (with Mirel Iancovici) and orchestral conducting (with Edmond Saveniers). In Maastricht, he was also awarded the Hustinckx Prize.

Since then, he has conducted a wide variety of productions, including opera, operetta, ballet, symphonic and chamber repertoire, oratorio, and contemporary music.

His particular affinity with the human voice, in combination with his extensive experience as a répétiteur pianist, led him to specialise in music theatre repertoire. Among the highlights of recent years are the creation and tour of Annelies Van Parys' chamber opera *Notwehr* (commissioned by the Venice Biennale) and a music theatre production centred around the folkloric figure of Lange Wapper (featuring Clara Cleymans, Prince K. Appiah and Casco Phil).

It was within the somewhat neglected comic repertoire that his expertise would flourish, where humour and music converge in a fusion of spoken word, *parlando* singing, and grand lyrical moments. He has 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* (Lehár), *Eine Nacht in Venedig*, *Die Fledermaus* (Strauss), *Clivia* (Dostal), *Les Mousquetaires au couvent* (Varney), and *La Belle de Cadix* (López).

Through his growing affinity with the genre, he uncovered many forgotten works—one of the reasons why he founded *Volksopera* in 2014. The initiative aims both to

preserve the musical quality of this repertoire and to innovate its modes of presentation by confronting current theatrical paradigms.

Volksopera has realised productions of *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 around *The Bear* (Walton).

In May 2025, he will defend his doctoral dissertation, titled '*La Grande Bouffe: Challenges in the performance of musical comedy*', which will include excerpts from the Belgian operetta *Brueghelkermis*.

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