

Biography

Stijn Saveniers is a versatile conductor and researcher.

He is the artistic director of his own comic music theatre company, Volksopera Antwerp; he is a fixed member of the Antwerp based contemporary music ensemble HERMESensemble; and as a doctoral researcher into the use of humour in music for theatre he is connected to the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp (ARIA) and the Orpheus Institute Ghent (docARTES programme); and he is part of the Study Centre for Flemish Music, where he collaborates on new critical editions.

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, oratorio, 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 the creation of Annelies Van Parys's *Notwehr*, a new chamber opera commissioned by and premiered on the Venice Biennale 2022, the release of a new operetta and radio play, *Boze Bejaarden* (*Angry Elderly* – a collaboration between Wunderbaum, HERMESensemble and Volksopera), and a March 2023 highly transparent and participatory *La Périchole* production among recent highlights.

It became abundantly clear that the often-neglected comic repertoire would define his signature style, combining humour 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 and comical qualities 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).

In the following months, his PhD research on humour in music will enter its final stage; next academic year will include the organisation of a research seminar, the performance of a Belgian chamber operetta, as well as the completion of three critical publications of Belgian operettas by Summer 2024.

Additional info, photos, audio and video examples can be found on

www.stijnsaveniers.com

www.volksopera.be

www.volkssalon.be

www.hermesensemble.be