

Donizetti's rousing opera Roberto Devereux



By [Daniel Derksen](#)

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Opera lovers can indulge in Sir David McVicar's sumptuous production of Donizetti's Roberto Devereux in the Live in HD season from The Metropolitan Opera in New York at Nouveau cinemas on 7, 17 and 19 May at 5pm; 8 May at 2.30pm; and on 10 and 18 May at 11.30am.

Roberto Devereux had its Met premiere on 24 March this year, marking the anniversary of Queen Elizabeth I's death, on 24 March, 1603.

In this first-ever production for the Met, the climactic opera of Donizetti's Tudor Queens trilogy, which includes Anna Bolena and Maria Stuarda, Sondra Radvanovsky plays Queen Elizabeth I, who is forced to sign the death warrant of the nobleman she loves, Roberto Devereux, sung by tenor Matthew Polenzani. Mezzo-soprano Elīna Garanča and baritone Mariusz Kwiecien complete the principal quartet in the bel canto masterpiece as Sara, the Duchess of Nottingham who is secretly in love with her husband's best friend, Devereux, the Duke of Nottingham.



Rebellious Irish chieftains

England, 1599. Robert Devereux, Earl of Essex and favourite of Queen Elizabeth I, is sent to Ireland with an army to defeat rebellious Irish chieftains. After an unsuccessful campaign, and against the queen's orders, he returns to England where his actions are deemed a dereliction of duty. The story of the opera takes its inspiration from the events of the following two years, which are condensed into a few days.

Conducted by Donizetti specialist Maurizio Benini, the production is by Sir David McVicar, who, with this staging, completes an enormously ambitious directorial accomplishment. McVicar makes his Met debut as set designer with this production, which also features costumes designed by Moritz Junge, lighting designed by Paule Constable, and choreography by Leah Hausman.

Roberto Devereux is generally considered one of Donizetti's finest compositions. Following a commission by the Teatro San Carlo in Naples to write the opera, Donizetti suffered multiple tragedies, including the death of a stillborn child, followed by the deaths of his wife and another child. He wrote most of the score for Roberto Devereux in a month's time frame. The opera was first performed in October of 1837 in Naples and then staged across Europe at most of the prominent opera houses.

It was not until 1964 that opera houses began staging this work again, beginning with the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples in 1964. Devereux was performed in New York City at the New York City Opera with Beverly Sills as Elizabeth and Plácido Domingo as the title character.

Exclusive intermission feature

The special intermission feature during Roberto Devereux is an original short film, one of the Gallery Met Shorts productions.

The film, Roberto Devereux, is directed by Genieve Figgis and is set to music from Donizetti's opera. For Figgis, this was her first time working on an animated project.

"I directed the focus to the paint since I am a painter," she said. "I wanted the characters in this particular short to feel as though they were alive, similar to Elizabeth I's portrait in the National Gallery in London. I have always felt that history and art sit together very well."

The short film features animation by Grace Chan and photography by Aoife Herrity with special thanks to Genieve Figgis Studio, Co Wicklow, Ireland, and Half Gallery, New York City, US. Gallery Met Shorts allows celebrated visual artists to use animation, video, and film to create original artworks set to music from operas in the Met's season.



Roberto Devereux has limited screenings exclusively at Cinema Nouveau and select Ster-Kinekor theatres countrywide from Saturday, 7 May, including: Gateway Nouveau in Durban; V&A Waterfront Nouveau in Cape Town; Ster-Kinekor Somerset Mall in Somerset West and Garden Route Mall in George; Rosebank Nouveau and Ster-Kinekor Bedford Centre in Joburg; and at Brooklyn Nouveau in Pretoria.

The running time is approximately 3 hours and 30 minutes, including an interval.

For booking information on The Met: Live in HD season, go to www.cinemanouveau.co.za or www.sterkinekor.com. Download the Ster-Kinekor App on any Nokia, Samsung Android, iPhone or Blackberry smartphone for updates, news and to make bookings. Follow on Twitter [@nouveaubuzz](https://twitter.com/nouveaubuzz) and on Facebook at Cinema Nouveau. For information, call Ticketline on 0861-Movies (668 437).

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ABOUT DANIEL DERCKSEN

Daniel Dercken has been a contributor for Lifestyle since 2012. As the driving force behind the successful independent training initiative The Writing Studio and a published film and theatre journalist of 40 years, teaching workshops in creative writing, playwriting and screenwriting throughout South Africa and internationally the past 22 years. Visit www.writingstudio.co.za

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