

Rossini was clearly a great storyteller with a lovely self-deprecating sense of humor.

Here is an excerpt from one of **Rossini's** letters: (taken from Composers on Music by Sam Morgenstern, pp.105-6 - date of the letter unknown)

The Best Time to Compose an Overture

Wait until the evening before opening night. Nothing primes inspiration more than necessity, whether it be the presence of a copyist waiting for your work or the prodding of an impresario tearing his hair. In my time, all the impresarios in Italy were bald at thirty.

I composed the overture to *Otello* in a little room in the Barbaja palace wherein the baldest and fiercest of directors had forcibly locked me with a lone plate of spaghetti and the threat that I would not be allowed to leave the room alive until I had written the last note.

I wrote the overture to *La Gazza Ladra* the day of its opening in the theater itself, where I was imprisoned by the director and under the surveillance of four stagehands who were instructed to throw my original text through the window, page by page, to the copyists waiting below to transcribe it. In default of pages, they were ordered to throw me out the window bodily.

[I imagine it might actually have taken four stagehands to throw him out a window. He was surely used to eating more than just ONE plate of spaghetti!]

I did better with *The Barber*. I did not compose an overture, but selected for it one which was meant for a semi-serious opera called *Elisabetta*. The public was completely satisfied.

I composed the overture to *Conte Ory* while fishing, with my feet in the water, and in company of Signor Agnado who talked of Spanish finance. The overture for *William Tell* was composed under more or less similar circumstances. And as for *Mosè*, I did not write one.