

# LA TRAVIATA

BY GIUSEPPE VERDI



## *LA TRAVIATA* STUDY GUIDE

IN PERFORMANCE AT THE SOUTHERN ALBERTA JUBILEE AUDITORIUM

DRESS REHEARSAL THURSDAY, MARCH 31ST

MAINSTAGE PRODUCTIONS APRIL 2/6/8, 2022



We acknowledge that together we live, work and play on the traditional territories of the peoples of Treaty 7 region, which includes the Blackfoot First Nation tribes of Siksika, Kainai and Piikani, the Tsuut'ina, the Iyârhe Nakoda First Nation tribes of Bearspaw, Chiniki and Wesley and the Region 3 Métis Nation of Alberta.

## OUR FINAL SHOW OF THE SEASON

Hello educators and students,

Welcome to our last performance in our 2021-22 season, Giuseppe Verdi's *La Traviata*. It is incredible that this is our second mainstage performance since reopening in person performances. Sitting in the audience at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium as the curtain went up on *The Merry Widow* in January I was reminded of the importance of live opera, live art, and being together with others to experience it. At this time on our planet we need more opportunities like this, to be together and share an experience, and to share the emotions that come from taking in a live performance. Opera reminds us of our shared humanity, the stories we have in common, the things that bring us together rather than separate us.

*La Traviata* is Verdi at the pinnacle of his career. The achingly beautiful music and heartbreaking story come together so powerfully to remind us of the sweetness of new love, the jealousy and bitterness of love lost, what sacrifice for another means, how petty and judgmental we can be as people and, ultimately, how precious and fragile life really is.

I hope that you enjoy this performance and savour being able to share it with us in person once again. As we look forward to our 50th season coming in the fall of 2022 and the excitement of all of our upcoming plans, this opera reminds us that we're not there yet, we must slow down and pay attention to life right now, in all its tragic and unfair truth and help each other along, regardless of our perceived differences.

Sincerely,

Patricia Kesler

Education and Community Engagement Manager, Calgary Opera

For more information about our Education programs please see our website: <https://calgaryopera.com/education>



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE #
PREPARING FOR THE OPERA—WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO	4, 5
A BRIEF HISTORY OF OPERA	6, 7
Q & A WITH OUR NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR JONATHAN BRANDANI	8
CHARACTERS IN THE OPERA	9
SYNOPSIS (OR, THE PLOT)	10
ABOUT THE COMPOSER GIUSEPPE VERDI	11, 12
ABOUT THE LIBRETTIST FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE	13
ABOUT OUR CONDUCTOR GORDON GERRARD	
<i>LA TRAVIATA</i> ARTISTIC TEAM	14
PRINCIPAL CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES	15
ABOUT OUR DIRECTOR ALAIN GAUTHIER AND HIS VISION FOR <i>LA TRAVIATA</i>	16
HISTORY OF <i>LA TRAVIATA</i> & OUR PRODUCTION	17, 18
PREPARING FOR THE OPERA—WHAT TO LISTEN FOR	19
ACTIVITIES & IDEAS TO CONSIDER	20, 21
LANGUAGE OF OPERA & VOICE TYPES	22
BIBLIOGRAPHY	23

# PREPARING FOR THE OPERA

## WHAT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

### PART I: PREPARING FOR THE OPERA EXPERIENCE

The more students are prepared for this experience, the more they will get out of it and the more they will enjoy it. Knowing the story, the life and times of the composer, and the music is very important to make their opera experience is a sensational one!

#### BEFORE THE OPERA

Teachers and students may review the study guide and all of the suggested activities and discussions. Some of the activities/discussions should be started prior to seeing the opera. Preparing students ahead of time gives them a chance to view the opera within the context of what they will be working on after the performance such as history, reviewing, character studies, discussions, etc.

- Read the enclosed synopsis of *La Traviata*, which provides a background and helps familiarize students and teachers with the story
- Listen to the music excerpts found on pg 19
- Read the history of the opera on pgs 17-18, composer and director on pgs 11-12, 16, and familiarize your group with the language of the opera on pg 22. All items in the guide can be reproduced
- Familiarize students with the characters and their opera voice types (i.e. soprano, bass, and tenor) on pg 22. A discussion can be held afterwards to see if students were able to discern between the different voice types
- Discuss the characters and plot, and engage students in discussion around the themes suggested
- You may wish to assign a writing exercise for the students to create a review on the opera – a guideline for writing reviews is included in this study guide on pgs 20-21.

#### ATTENDING THE OPERA

There's nothing more exciting than attending an opera! You'll be a guest at the final dress rehearsal of *La Traviata*. The preparation for this opera began a long time ago, several years ago in fact, when the opera was chosen and the artists were asked to perform in the opera. From costume construction to singers memorizing their lines, to putting the lighting and set together at the Jubilee Auditorium, countless hours of creative work have gone into making this production possible for you. Here's what you'll need to know about attending the opera:

At the Jubilee Auditorium, you may notice a long table with lights and people sitting behind it in the centre of the main floor of the auditorium. Seated in this area is the production team: Director, Lighting Designer, and Choreographer (among others). They'll be taking notes and communicating with the many people backstage who help make all of the operatic magic happen. They'll be able to talk to the crew so changes can be made. Should anything need some adjustments, the rehearsal might be stopped or a part repeated to make sure that it is perfect.

# PREPARING FOR THE OPERA CONTINUED



Welcome to the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium

## DURING THE OPERA

Unlike actors on television or in the movies, performers onstage are very aware of the audience. They want to share their love of performing with you. Everything you do in the audience affects what happens on stage. You can show them how much you appreciate their work and the opportunity to come to the rehearsal by being as quiet as possible and not talking or sharing your opinions with your friends or teachers until the intermission or after the show.

Give the artists and the production your full attention!

## HERE'S A LIST OF THINGS TO DO AT THE THEATRE:

Please Do...

- Use the bathrooms before the rehearsal begins or at intermission
- Enter and exit the theatre in an orderly fashion, Dress Rehearsals are General Admission, which means you can sit wherever you would like
- Turn off your cell phones and all electronic devices, no photography or video recording is allowed during the performance
- Applaud when the conductor enters and bows, then again after the overture, the 5-10 minute musical introduction played only by the orchestra that begins the show
- Applaud after the arias as well as after the performance; you can shout "Bravo!" for a man, "Brava!" for a woman, and "Bravi!" for more than one person, or the whole performance
- Enjoy the rehearsal! It is a wonderful feeling to be in theatre with other audience members experiencing a live performance, especially after so many months of not being able to!
- Have a discussion with your family, friends and teachers during the intermission and after the show is over about what you liked best, what you didn't like, parts that surprised you and more. The more you talk about, and think about, the show after you have seen it, the better you will remember it later on

## WHAT TO WEAR AT THE OPERA

In the past, opera audiences have been known to wear lavish gowns as well as top hats and bow ties, giving the rest of the public a feeling that opera isn't for everyone, which is definitely not the case! In today's opera lovers' world, audiences come dressed in whatever they feel most comfortable! Your pajamas might attract stares, but to each his own!

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF OPERA

It is not possible to discuss opera without discussing the milieu into which it was born. Many operas written in the past are not consistent with our modern world view whether we are talking about gender, race, or acceptable ways of addressing these topics. With that in mind, we can look further to find out why opera is still so relevant and moving today.

The word opera comes from the Italian “opera in musica,” which means “works or plays in music.” Simply put, opera is a play in which the characters sing their lines rather than speak them, with music as its driving force. It is a mixture of many different types of art, combining music, drama, dance, elaborate costumes, and scenery.

The first completely sung musical drama (or opera) developed as a result of discussions held in Florence in the 1570s by a group of intellectuals, poets, artist, scientists, and humanists who called themselves “The



Florentine Camerata”. One particular point of their focus was the joint belief that music, in

particular vocal works, had become over-embellished and complex, and that returning to a more pure form would be a powerful way to tell stories and express emotions. Gathering inspiration from Classical Greece, its dramas, and the idea of the Greek chorus, they evolved the idea of a single vocal line with simple instrumental support. They called this new style of singing-declamation *recitativo*. At the time, it was argued that *recitativo* was far superior to spoken verse since the musical inflections intensified the implied emotions. In English, we use the word *recitative*.

The first opera, *Dafne*, was composed by Jacopo Peri in 1597 and tells the story of the nymph who fled from Apollo and was turned into a laurel tree as a way to save her virtue. The opera was a through-composed musical work comprised of recitative sections (to reveal the plot of the drama) and arias, which develop the emotions of the character. Sadly, most of the music for the opera has been lost.

However, Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, composed in 1607 and based on the Orpheus myth, can still be heard today in performance and recordings: <https://youtu.be/sKD1qUVJJBU>



Claudio Monteverdi

While opera was initially written for the noble courts, once it moved to Venice in the mid-17th Century it exploded in popularity and became an art form accessible to and written for all people.

Italy carried on with Giacomo Puccini through to 1924, as well as Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, Verdi and Leoncavallo who all developed the art form through clearly defined periods that produced *opera buffa*, *opera seria*, *bel canto* and *verismo*. While Italians were the originators of opera as we know it, many other countries quickly excelled in their own right. Mozart (1756-1791) wrote operas in Italian as well as German and championed the *Singspiel* (sing play), which combined the spoken word with music (*The Magic Flute* 1791, *Abduction from the Seraglio* 1782), a form also used by Beethoven in his opera *Fidelio*.

Bizet (*Carmen*), Offenbach (*Les Contes D'Hoffmann*), Gounod (*Faust*) and Meyerbeer (*Les Huguenots*) led the adaptation by the French which ranged from the *opéra comique* to the grand full-scale *tragédie lyrique*.

*Continued on next page*

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF OPERA CONTINUED

(opera history cont.)

German composers von Weber (*Der Freschutz*), Richard Strauss (*Ariadne auf Naxos*), and Wagner (*Der Ring des Nibelungen*) developed diverse forms, such as *Singspiel* and through-composed spectacles unified through the uses of *leitmotif*, a musical component that repeats itself throughout the opera. The English *ballad opera*, Spanish *zarzuela* and Viennese *operetta* helped to establish opera as a form of entertainment which continues to enjoy great popularity throughout the world.



George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* at Teatro la Scala (2016)

well.

<https://youtu.be/VfziZxrXNy0>

Composer John Estacio and librettist John Murrell were commissioned by Calgary Opera to create *Filumena*, based on a true Canadian story of the last woman to be hanged in Alberta. It premiered in 2003 in Calgary to great success, and is one of the most produced Canadian grand operas in the world.



John Adam's *Nixon in China*, Vancouver Opera

<https://youtu.be/SUGLhfZmSxl>

With the beginning of the 20th century, composers in North America diverged from European traditions in

order to focus on their own stories while exploring and developing the vast body of the country's folk music and legends. Composers such as George Gershwin with *Porgy and Bess*, Douglas Moore with *The Ballad of Baby Doe*, Carlisle Floyd with *Suzanna*, John Adams with *Nixon in China* and Gian Carlo Menotti with *The Medium*, have all crafted operas that have been presented throughout the world to great success.



(L to R) Eric Owens & Susanna Phillips in Kaija Saariaho's *L'amour de Loin* at The Metropolitan Opera, New York (2016)



Laura Whalen as the title character in Calgary Opera's *Filumena* (2003)

Examples of many successful Canadian operas exist as

well.

Finally, opera has grown to be more self-reflective in recent times, addressing disparities of representation in the opera world by creating space for and showcasing works from women as well as a more diverse group of composers and librettists. Works such as the many operas of Kaija Saariaho and Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut up in my Bones* (2019), show how masterfully opera can share everyone's stories, not just those traditionally heard.

# Q & A WITH OUR NEW ARTISTIC DIRECTOR JONATHAN BRANDANI

Calgary Opera is pleased to welcome Jonathan Brandani, a sought-after rising star of the classical music world, as the company's new Artistic Director. Calgary Opera audiences will remember Maestro Brandani as the conductor of Calgary Opera's box office record-shattering 2019 production of Puccini's *La Bohème*.

Maestro Brandani's career features renowned orchestras and opera companies from around the world; from his hometown in Lucca, Italy (also the birthplace of legendary composer, Giacomo Puccini), to Ireland, Austria, the United States, Spain, Germany, and South Korea. He received an honours degree in Orchestra Conducting from the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna and holds a Master of Music in Orchestra Conducting from Yale University. After graduating in Piano, Jonathan studied Composition, Harpsichord and Historically Informed Performance Practice at the Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst in Vienna, and Musicology at the University of Pavia (Italy). He is also a laureate of the Merola Opera Program of San Francisco Opera.

Maestro Brandani is excited to be in Calgary with his wife and two young sons and looks forward to becoming a part of the community.

Here he answers some questions about *La Traviata* for our Study Guide readers:

## **Why is *La Traviata* still an important opera after so many years?**

(JB) *La Traviata* is one of Verdi's masterpieces and a staple of the operatic repertoire worldwide.

The music is so wonderful and incredibly expressive: depending on the scene, it is brilliant, moving, romantic, heartbreaking, melancholic, uplifting. Shortly, the music does such a great job of bringing to the forefront the passions and the in-

ner struggles of the characters. Verdi's music makes you feel the same emotions that the characters feel on stage, and accompanies you through an emotional journey that only the greatest music can let you experience.



## **What is it about Verdi and the way he composes that makes his operas stand out from others?**

(JB) Verdi had an absolutely great sense of what is needed to create a great theatrical experience. He always picked strong stories with which he and his contemporaries (and even us today) could relate in very deep manner. On top of that, through his music he was able to strike an ideal balance between great sophistication and extreme accessibility. His music is memorable, easy to listen to, and yet of an incredible depth of expression.

## **What are you most excited about in Calgary Opera's *La Traviata* production?**

(JB) Of course I am looking forward to experiencing great singing by great artists, but I also can't wait to enjoy the beautiful visual aspect of this production: I think our audience will love the amazing set and the elegant costumes.

# CHARACTERS IN THE OPERA

CHARACTER	VOICE TYPE	SINGER	ROLE DESCRIPTION
Violetta Valéry	Soprano	Talise Trevigne	A music-hall artist, the main love interest who knows she is sick with a fatal illness
Alfredo Germont	Tenor	Andrew Haji	Violetta's long time admirer from afar, becomes her love
Giorgio Germont	Baritone	Hyung Yun	Alfredo's father, who societal worries lead him to convince Violetta to leave his son
Dr Grenvil	Bass-Baritone	TBD	Cares for Violetta in her final illness
Flora Bervoix	Mezzo-Soprano	Simran Claire*	Hosts lavish parties at her Paris home and is Violetta's friend
Baron Douphol	Baritone	Jeremy Dubé*	Violetta was involved with Baron before Alfredo
Annina	Mezzo-Soprano	Juliana Krajčovič*	
Gastone de Leto-rières	Tenor	Tayte Mitchell*	
Marchese D'Obigny	Baritone	Dominic Vielleux*	
Messenger	Baritone	Adam Arnold**	
Giuseppe	Tenor	Oliver Munar**	
Flora's Servant	Baritone	Oliver Peplowski**	

\*Members of Calgary Opera McPhee Artist Development program

\*\*Members of Calgary Opera Chorus

Calgary Opera Chorus for this production consists of 8 Sopranos, 10 Mezzos, 10 Baritones, 9 Tenors.

They are:

Gretchen Castronuovo	Dallas Hayes-Sparks	Adam Arnold	Réjean Campbell
Nicole Cates	Gail Ingelson	Allen Crowley	Don Edie
Craig Madison	Eva Knight	Mike Johnson	Christopher Gazzard
Anna Draper	Sarah Nearing	Paul Lloyd	Thomas McDonald
Alyssa Durnie	Eswina Ngai	David Ng	Herbert Mielczarek
Valerie Hudson	Sandy Nolette	Mihnea Nitu	Stuart Miller
Taylor Matheson	Cathy Robinson	Graham Paynter	Oliver Munar
Charlotte Schmidke	Meaghan Schulz	Oliver Peplowski	Josh Paynter
Rosemary Van Dyk	Tim Vollhoffer	Richard Taylor-Kerr	JT Steenkamp

# SYNOPSIS (OR, THE PLOT)

## ACT I

In her Paris salon, the courtesan Violetta Valéry greets party guests, including Flora Bervoix, the Marquis d'Obigny, Baron Douphol, and Gastone, who introduces a new admirer, Alfredo Germont. This young man, having adored Violetta from afar, joins her in a drinking song (Brindisi: "Libiamo"). An orchestra is heard in the next room, but as guests move there to dance, Violetta suffers a fainting spell, sends the guests on ahead, and goes to her parlour to recover. Alfredo comes in, and since they are alone, he confesses his love. At first Violetta protests that love means nothing to her. Something about the young man's sincerity touches her, however, and she promises to meet him the next day. After the guests have gone, Violetta wonders if Alfredo could actually be the man she could love ("Ah, fors'è lui"). She decides she wants freedom, though Alfredo's voice, heard outside, argues in favour of romance.

## ACT II

Some months later, Alfredo and Violetta are living in a country house near Paris, where Alfredo praises their contentment ("*De' miei bollenti spiriti*"). When the maid, Annina, reveals that Violetta has pawned her jewels to keep the house, Alfredo leaves for the city to settle matters at his own cost. Violetta comes looking for him and finds an invitation from Flora to a party that night. Violetta has no intention of going back to her old life, but trouble arises with the appearance of Alfredo's father. Though impressed by Violetta's ladylike manners, he demands she renounce his son: the scandal of Alfredo's affair with her has threatened his daughter's engagement. Violetta says she cannot, but Germont eventually convinces her. Alone, the desolate woman sends a message of acceptance to Flora and begins a farewell note to Alfredo. He enters suddenly, surprising her, and she can barely control herself as she reminds him of how deeply she loves him before rushing out.

A servant hands Alfredo her farewell note as Germont returns to console his son with reminders of family life in Provence. However Alfredo, seeing Flora's invitation, suspects Violetta has thrown him over for another lover. Furious, he determines to confront her at the party.

At her soirée that evening, Flora learns from the Marquis that Violetta and Alfredo have parted, then clears the floor for hired entertainers - a band of fortune-telling Gypsies and some matadors who sing of Piquillo and his coy sweetheart. Soon Alfredo strides in, making bitter comments about love and gambling recklessly at cards. Violetta has arrived with Baron Douphol, who challenges Alfredo to a game and loses a small fortune to him. Everyone goes in to supper, but Violetta has asked Alfredo to see her. Fearful of the Baron's anger, she wants Alfredo to leave, but he misunderstands her apprehension and demands that she admit she loves Douphol. Crushed, she pretends she does. Now Alfredo calls in the others, denounces his former love and hurls his winnings at her feet. Germont enters in time to see this and denounces his son's behaviour. The guests rebuke Alfredo and Douphol challenges him to a duel.

## ACT III

In Violetta's bedroom six months later, Dr. Grenvil tells Annina her mistress does not have long to live. Alone, Violetta rereads a letter from Germont saying the Baron was only wounded in his duel. Full of remorse, Germont has told Alfredo about Violetta's sacrifice. Alfredo wants to rejoin her as soon as possible. Violetta is afraid that he might be too late ("*Addio, del passato*"). The sound of rampant celebrations are heard from outside while Violetta is in mortal agony. However Alfredo does arrive and the reunion fills Violetta with a final euphoria (Duet: "*Parigi, o cara*"). Her energy and exuberant joy of life return and all sorrow and suffering seems to have left her—a final illusion, before death from tuberculosis claims her.

# ABOUT THE COMPOSER GIUSEPPE VERDI

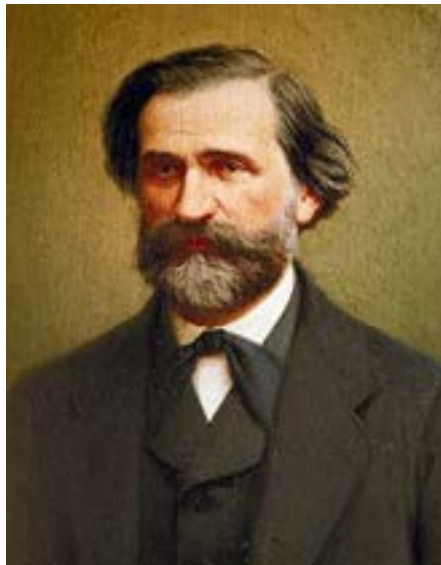
Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi was born October 9 or 10, 1813 in Roncole, near Busseto, duchy of Parma, Italy, and was the leading Italian opera composer in the 19th century.

Verdi was born into a poor farming family. When he was young his father wanted to give him the best possible education and so arranged music lessons from the age of 4, bought him a spinet (a type of small upright piano) and by the age of 9 he was filling in for the organist at the local church. At the age of 10 Verdi moved to the nearby city of Busseto to further his studies. There he began composing music for the church and was noticed by local businessman and merchant Antonio Barezzi. Barezzi was passionate about music and took Verdi under his wing, bringing him into his home and encouraging his further musical education in Milan.

Milan in the early-to mid-1800s was the intellectual and operatic centre of Italy and Verdi was exposed to literature, politics and lots of opera. After working hard to develop his first compositions, in March of 1839 Verdi succeeded in having one of his early operas, *Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*, produced at the famous La Scala opera house (*Teatro alla Scala*). As simple as the piece was, it garnered enough success to tour within Italy and gained him notoriety and commissions for further works.

He married the daughter of his early benefactor Mr. Barezzi, Margherita, who died in 1840. They had two children together, both of whom died within a few years of their mother. Grief-stricken and alone, Verdi saw his following opera, *Un giorno di regno*, booted off of the stage at La Scala, an injury he would never forget. The outcome was that Verdi fell into a deep depression that affected his personality and outlook to the end of his days.

Fortunately, he was still creating work from the depths of despair and released *Nabucco* in 1842 to wild success. This catapulted him into the fore-



front of Italian music, making him famous not only in Italy, but all around the world. Within a decade, *Nabucco* was performed as far away as Buenos Aires, Argentina and is still performed worldwide to this day.

Following *Nabucco*, Verdi set himself a standard of creating two new operas a year. He was attempting to earn enough money to retire early to the peaceful farming life in Sant'Agata, a village close to Roncole, where he was born. This was an incredibly

difficult pace to keep, considering that the task of creating an opera in those times included finding the funding for the piece, hiring the singers, attending the early rehearsals and conducting the first 3 performances. He managed to maintain this frantic pace although none of the operas composed at that time are still performed today, with the exception of *Ernani*, created in 1844. For subject matter he mined all of the great authors of the day including Victor Hugo, Lord Byron, Friedrich von Schiller, Voltaire and, later, even Shakespeare. In 1847 he once again met the prima donna Giuseppina Strepponi who had played Abigaille in his *Nabucco*. In time she became his second wife, but it was widely known that he often treated her poorly, refusing to allow her to travel with him and leaving her in Sant'Agata, where their relationship was looked upon scandalously. It is widely believed that the dramatic characteristics that he gave to the heroines in his operas of this time were influenced by Strepponi. In fact, his most endearing operas were composed then: *Rigoletto* (1851), *Il trovatore* (1853), and *La Traviata* (1853). He was becoming a true master of his craft and it showed in these pieces.

Nonetheless, through the years he became more bitter, battled with all those around him, and fought any editing or substitutions in his operas. When he happened upon the idea of adapting Victor Hugo's

# ABOUT THE COMPOSER GIUSEPPE VERDI

CONTINUED

*Le roi s'amuse* into an opera, *Rigoletto*, he came up against the most vociferous and unrelenting censors yet. Hugo's piece had been banned in Paris after opening night because of its unsavoury depiction of royalty, but Verdi's determination knew no bounds and he and his librettist Francesco Maria Piave, finally had their opera shown to great success.

Verdi had become an international celebrity and from 1855 to 1870 he turned his sights towards mastering pieces for the Parisian public. The appetite in France was for long, spectacular dramas with heavy subject matter that included a section of ballet. He was attempting to rival Giacomo Meyerbeer, the one composer who was better known than he at the time. Verdi honed his craft, and while many operas from this time are forgotten, his *Simon Boccanegra* (1857) and *Un ballo in maschera* (1859) are still favourites.

In 1862 Verdi represented all Italian musicians at the London Exhibition. This was a sure sign of his fame, and signified that Verdi was the face of Italian music for all the world. In the same year, he was commissioned to create an opera in St. Petersburg. He used the opportunity to test ideas he had been working on. Verdi wanted to create a sweeping saga that spanned many years and many different locations, a story that explored both the highs and the lows in society and life. He succeeded in doing this with *La forza del destino* (1862), a piece that has stood the test of time.

Finally, in 1867, for the Paris Opera, he wrote *Don Carlos*. The opera was so successful that public opinion held that he had finally surpassed Giacomo Meyerbeer as greatest opera writer of the time. One more famous commission, this time by the Khedive of Egypt to celebrate the opening of Cairo's new opera house in 1869, led him to create *Aida*. With *Aida*, Verdi had achieved his most emotionally compelling and mature piece to date.

When another famous opera writer of the time, Gioachino Rossini, died in 1868, Verdi suggested that he and his contemporaries create a requiem mass in his honour. Verdi's increasingly cynical

and unforgiving personality fuelled the collapse of the project and cost him his relationship with one of his closest friends, Angelo Mariani. There was a rumour going around that Verdi was in love with Mariani's fiancée, the soprano Teresa Stolz. The alleged affair continued for years and Verdi and Stolz remained in contact until his death where she was among those at his deathbed.

After 1873 Verdi took retirement, as he had wanted to do, on a farm in Sant'Agata. He focused his extreme energy and diligence on farming and became a very wealthy landowner. He also became charitable donor and founded the *Casa di Riposo per Musicisti*, a home in Milan for aged musicians that still operates today as *Casa Verdi*, also where he and his wife are buried.

Determined not to allow his



Above: Casa Verdi, Milan, Italy)

most profitable composer to stagnate in Sant'Agata for the rest of his days, Verdi's agent, Giulio Ricordi, convinced the prominent poet Arrigo Boito to write a libretto based on Shakespeare's *Othello*. Verdi couldn't resist the libretto which he considered far superior to any he had worked from before. *Otello*, the opera, came into existence when Verdi was 74 years old, and again, went on to great success.

After *Otello*, Verdi returned to his home in Sant'Agata, stating that he would compose no more. Ricordi and Boito, however, had other plans for him and convinced him, one last time, to compose the music to a libretto Boito had pulled together based on a character named Falstaff from Shakespeare's plays.

*Falstaff* was a comedy and the final opera of Verdi's career. It opened at La Scala in 1893 to roaring success, finally avenging the cruel dismissal of his *Un giorno di regno* 50 years before.

Verdi's wife, Giuseppina, died in 1897 after a long illness and he, weakening slowly, died four years later on January 27th, 1901 in Milan, Italy.

## ABOUT THE LIBRETTIST FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE

Italian librettist Francesco Maria Piave was born in Murano, Italy on May 18, 1810. He is best known for his multiple librettos written for Verdi operas.

Piave was the son of a glassmaker. In his youth he studied for the clergy, eventually finding work as a proof reader. As a young man he moved to Rome where he found his place in the city's artistic and literary circles. There he met the librettist Jacopo Ferretti. Ferretti had a great influence on him, and when he returned to Venice he began writing librettos himself. His first libretto *Don Marzio*, completed in 1842 for Levi, was never performed. He completed the libretto of Giovanni Peruzzini, *Il duca d'Alba* for Pacini as well. He began working



with Verdi in 1844 on *Ernani*, and, finding each other satisfactory, the pair continued on working together over the next 18 years with *I due Foscari*, *Macbeth*, *Il Corsaro*, *Stiffelio*, *Rigoletto*, *La Traviata*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Aroldo* and finally *La forze del destino* in 1862.

Throughout his career, Piave wrote librettos for several composers, but none had the same longevity and popularity as those that he wrote with Verdi. As well as being a librettist, he worked as a poet and a stage director for *La Fenice* theatre in Venice. In 1859 he moved to Milan to work as a stage director at the renowned opera house, La Scala.

In 1867 he suffered a massive stroke that left him unable to move or speak for 9 years until his death in Milan on March 5, 1876. At the time of the stroke he was writing a libretto for Ponchielli that remained unfinished. During those final years, Verdi and his wife, Giuseppina Strepponi, often cared for the bedridden Piave. He is credited with having written 28 librettos over the course of his life.

## ABOUT OUR CONDUCTOR GORDON GERRARD



Conductor Gordon Gerrard is among the exciting new generation of music directors that are demonstrating fresh visions for orchestral leadership in Canada. Gordon has distinguished himself as

a leader in innovative and inclusionary programming. Trained first as a pianist and subsequently

as a specialist in operatic repertoire, he brings a fresh perspective to the podium that has endeared him to audiences and musicians alike.

For Calgary Opera Maestro Gerrard has conducted *La Traviata*; *La Bohème*; *Romeo et Juliette*; *Die Fledermaus* and was Resident Conductor from 2007-2011.

Other appearances include Music Director of the Regina Symphony Orchestra; Associate Conductor of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra.

# LA TRAVIATA ARTISTIC TEAM

If there's one thing we know about opera, it is that it's a very expensive and complex artform which requires the collaborative work of many people both off-stage and on. To begin, an opera company rents or designs and builds the sets and the costumes for each production. They must hire principal singers, all of the chorus singers— sometimes there are 40+ chorus members— and an orchestra to play the music for the opera. In the case of Calgary Opera, we have the incredible honour of working with the Calgary Philharmonic Orchestra for all of our mainstage productions at the Jubilee Auditorium.

Finally, there is the Artistic Team. While some of the artistic team work with the opera company year round, like the Production and Technical Directors, most of the others must be hired on a show by show basis.

For the production of *La Traviata*, we brought Canadian Conductor Gordon Gerrard to lead the orchestra and music. The stage direction- what the singers do on stage- is decided and enacted by the Stage Director. In our production we are happy to have Alain Gauthier in this position. There are also dance scenes in this opera so there must also be a Choreographer who creates and teaches the dance moves to the performers.

While the Director takes care of what the performers are doing onstage, someone has to take care of all of the other details, and there are a lot of them! Those people are the Stage Manager Shelby-Jai Flick, and her Assistant Stage Manager Kennedy Greene.

The Chorus has an incredibly important role in an opera not only to add life to the stage and the story, but also to help support the story and the roles of the main characters. There is one person in charge of directing the Chorus and that is the Chorusmaster, our very own Head of Music, Mark Morash.

There are people that assist with making sure all set and costume pieces work well together, as well as those that put them together, alter them or otherwise make them fit for the stage. In our case, we have Scenic and Costume Designer Christina Puddubiuk and Heather Moore as our Wardrobe Manager. Costumes would have little effect without proper hair and makeup so we have Make Up Artist Gail Kennedy and Wig and Hair Artist, Franca Vaccaro, to complete the look of the performers.

Below are the lists of most of the people working behind the curtains and in the opera company, to make *La Traviata* a success.

## ARTISTIC TEAM

Conductor	Gordon Gerrard
Stage Director	Alain Gauthier
Choreographer	Tania Alvarado
Chorusmaster:	Mark Morash
Repetiteur	Carol-Anne Fraser
Scenic and Costume Designer	Christina Poddubiuk
Lighting Designer	Kevin Lamotte
Stage Manager	Shelby-Jai Flick
Assistant Stage Manager	Kennedy Greene
Assistant Stage Manager	Kate Pallesen
Wardrobe Manager	Heather Moore
Make Up Artist	Gail Kennedy
Wig and Hair Artist	Franca Vaccaro
Head of Props	Kesar Lacroix
Director of Production	Bonni Baynton
Technical Director	Cody Stadel
Production Assistant	Brett Johnson

## CALGARY OPERA STAFF

General Director & CEO	Heather Kitchen
Artistic Director	Jonathan Brandani
Director of Finance	Mitch Lavallee
Bookkeeper	Tobi Daniels
Director of Operations	Nicola Dawes
Company Manager	Sarah Minor
Executive Assistant	Catherine Rouleau
Database Administrator	Parth Brahmbatt
Head of Music & Chorus	Mark Morash
McPhee Artist Program Manager	Mel Kirby
Education & Community Engagement Manager	Patricia Kesler
Community Ambassador	Dallas Hayes-Sparks
Community Ambassador	Stephania Romaniuk
Community Ambassador	Jeanine Williams
Director of Fund Development	Suzanne Boyd
Major Gifts	Derek Moser
Grants, Foundations & Strategic Partnerships	Caitlin Russell

# PRINCIPAL CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES



## TALISE TREVIGNE AS VIOLETTA VALÉRY

Soprano Talise Trevigne is a singer recognized for the sheer beauty of her voice and exquisite stage presence. This is her Calgary Opera debut as Violetta. Other appearances: Kitty Hart in *Dead Man Walking* (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Mimi in *La bohème* (Fort Worth Opera); Ma in *Proving Up* (Omaha Opera); Nedda in *Pagliacci* (Madison Opera); Cio-Cio-san in *Madama Butterfly* (Theatre Basel); the title role in *Porgy & Bess* (Cincinnati Opera). She was greatly honoured to be nominated for a 2016 Grammy Award in the category Best Solo Classical CD for her rendition of Christopher Rouse's masterpiece *Kabir Padavali* with Albany Symphony.



## ANDREW HAJI AS ALFREDO GERMONT

Canadian tenor Andrew Haji has become one of the most sought-after voices on both operatic and concert stages. Winner of the Grand Prix at the 50th International Vocal Competition in 's-Hertogenbosch and the Montreal International Music Competition's Oratorio Prize, Haji recently debuted with Calgary Opera in *Norma* and performed Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* with the Orchestra of St. Luke's at Carnegie Hall. Andrew's upcoming and recent engagements include the Canadian Opera Company's digital productions of Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Mozart's *Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah* (National Arts Centre, Houston Symphony), and *La bohème* with Edmonton Opera.



## HYUNG YUN AS GIORGIO GERMONT

Baritone Hyung Yun has been acclaimed for his "subtle musicality and grand voice," and regularly performs on some of the most esteemed opera stages in the United States. This is his début with Calgary Opera. With The Metropolitan Opera, he has performed numerous roles including Valentin in *Faust* under Maestro James Levine, Lescaut in *Manon* with Renee Fleming in the title role, and Silvio in *Pagliacci*. With LA Opera he made his debut as Angelotti in *Tosca* and returned to sing Marcello in *La bohème*, Michelotto Cibo in *Die Gezeichneten*, and Lescaut in *Manon* with Rolando Villazón & Anna Netrebko under the baton of Plácido Domingo. He debuted as Ping in *Turandot* with the Santa Fe Opera and returned to sing in their 50th Anniversary Gala Concert. Most recently Yun returned to The Met for their production of *Madama Butterfly* and performed the title role in *Rigoletto* with Ash Lawn Opera. He also sang in numerous concerts around New York City as part of the Metropolitan Opera's Summer Recital Series. This season, Mr. Yun returns to The Metropolitan opera once again for their productions of *Turandot*.



## MATTHEW TREVIÑO AS DOCTOR GRENVIL

Bass Baritone Matthew Treviño is hailed as a "bass of rare talent" possessing a "mellifluous bass that is at once robust and gentle" that has been captivating audiences through his work in opera and theatre. Recent engagements include Bartolo in *Le nozze de Figaro* (Austin Opera), Seneca in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Florentine Opera), Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Opera Colorado), and many more. Currently he is working as Assistant Professor of Voice at McGill University.

# ABOUT OUR DIRECTOR ALAIN GAUTHIER AND HIS VISION FOR *LA TRAVIATA*



Born in Montreal, Alain Gauthier developed his directing skills at the Université du Québec à Montréal. As an apprentice director with the Atelier Lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, Gauthier confirmed his talent for stage direction. Collaborating regularly with the Opéra de Montréal, Alain staged a number of important works of the repertoire for the company, including *Pagliacci/Gianni Schicchi* and *Dead Man Walking*, which were hailed by critics and patrons as two of the most important productions in the company's history.

Mr. Gauthier has stage directed *La Traviata* and *Carmen* for Calgary Opera.

Other appearances include *La vie Parisienne* and *Die Zauberflöte* (Opéra de Québec); *L'Étoile*, *Così fan tutte*, *Pagliacci/Gianni Schicchi* and *Carmen* (Cincinnati Opera).

## ALAIN GAUTHIER'S VISION FOR CALGARY OPERA'S *LA TRAVIATA*

We have already discussed that Verdi wanted his opera to be set in the time in which he wrote it, the 1850's. He believed the story of Violetta and Alfredo to be relevant for the times in he lived. However, few directors heeded that directive, and as was also mentioned, the first time the opera was set in the 1850's was in the early 1900's. Likewise our Director, Mr. Alain Gauthier felt inspired to change the period in which our production is set to the 1920's Paris, just after WWI, in a time of artistic explosion. He drew his inspiration for Violetta's character from the famous jazz hall legend, Josephine Baker. Here are his notes:



When I'd been suggested to use the legendary figure of entertainer Joséphine Baker as an inspiration for this new production of *La Traviata*, I immediately sensed the potential of such a proposition. The music-hall scene in the 1920's Paris was at its peak, and stars like Baker were admired but also marginalized, just like Violetta in *La Traviata*.

After World War I, an insatiable taste for life led Europeans – and Parisians in particular – to an immoderate taste for money, luxury, pleasure, extravagance, arts... and women. Some of these women became the personification of this movement, especially in the music-hall milieu. In this post-war Paris – the capital of all pleasures – they were considered like the first modern-style celebrities; reporters followed them everywhere, and newspapers reported on their doings, including their pastimes and rivalries.

But, as much as they were worshiped in their own environment, these women could have easily been rejected when confronted to a more conventional segment of the society. The sometime scandalous aspect of their existence, but also their freedom towards their life choices, may have kept them away from a complete recognition as respectable women.

*La Traviata*, apart from originally being the unfortunate story of a sick courtesan, is also the tale of a rejected woman; rejected for her choices, but also for who she deeply is. We've decided to make the character of Violetta a music-hall artist to powerfully enhance the dramatic tensions of this heartbreaking story.—Alain Gauthier

# HISTORY OF *LA TRAVIATA* & OUR PRODUCTION

*La traviata* is an opera in three acts, written in Italian, that premiered in Venice at *La Fenice* opera house on March 6, 1853. Based upon the 1852 play by Alexandre Dumas fils (*La Dame aux camélias*), which was based on a book he wrote about his relationship with the real life courtesan Marie Duplessis, it is the story of a woman who sacrifices her love to uphold the honour of that love's family. Ultimately her sacrifice leads to her redemption, but it is too late, she dies of the disease that has been the scourge of many of opera's lead female characters, tuberculosis, known in those days as consumption. *La Traviata* means "the fallen woman", or "the one who goes astray", and refers to the main character, Violetta Valéry, a courtesan. While our version takes place in the music halls of 1920's Paris, what follows here is a study of the original time and setting.

Verdi, while in Paris for the winter in 1852, saw the play by Dumas and began formulating the opera in his head as he reached out to his long-time librettist collaborator, Francesco Maria Piave. He had taken French theatre as inspiration before with his operas *Rigoletto* and *Ernani*. The opera was an important part of Verdi's evolution as a composer, blurring the line between recitative and aria, and repeating a musical love theme to help tell the story. It dealt with ordinary members of society, versus the nobility and elite, which was unusual at the time. The original opera was set in 1850's Paris, a world in which a courtesan could exist within the patriarchy, but not without the aide of the wealthy men around her. The story is agonizing in its portrayal of Violetta, an intelligent and beautiful woman who has been made to believe that her risqué lifestyle can never truly be deemed acceptable. When faced with loving and being loved by Alfredo, it takes a lot of convincing, both from Alfredo and Violetta herself, that she could be worthy of such a love. When she does finally give herself to it, society

intrudes in the form of Alfredo's father Giorgio, to remind her that she is not a worthy match.

Although the story was provocative in its time, it was permitted to be performed. The management at *La Fenice* had been hounding Verdi for a new opera and this is the one he delivered, though he himself had doubts about how well it would be produced. His doubts were well founded as the opening was not a success. The only singer of note was the lead soprano, Fanny Salvini-Donatelli, who unfortunately did not suit the part of a beautiful young courtesan wasting away from tuberculosis. Verdi, however, had faith in his creation, stating to a conductor friend, "I do not think that the last word on *La Traviata* was uttered last night."

Two months later he was proven right; a revival of the work opened May 6, 1853, at the *Teatro San Benedetto* in Venice, with better suited singers as well as minor revisions to the score, and was an unqualified success.

Verdi saw the opera continue on to magnificent success within his lifetime and, obviously, far beyond. *La Traviata* is one of the most performed operas in the world. With beautiful melodies and an intimate story, it continues to captivate audiences to this day.

Unfortunately, the concept of a woman having to navigate the world of men and live on her own terms is still just as prescient, and the story would still not be out of place if told today. While Verdi insisted that opera be performed in what was then current times, the 1850's, early productions tended to set the action in the early 1800's. It wasn't until 1906 that a production honoured his wishes and set it in the 1850's, though it was not current times at that point.

Our production at Calgary Opera does not follow that directive either and is set in 1920's Paris, in the post WWI explosive return to music, luxury

## OUR PRODUCTION CONTINUED

and excess (for bohemians and those of means alike). Known as the “*Années Folles*” (the crazy years) Parisians were starving for a taste of the good life. This was expressed in the dance and music halls of Paris and influenced by the pre-war introduction of jazz, the influx of artists to the city, a profusion of cabarets and can-can dancers, and free flowing inexpensive absinthe. It was an ‘anything-goes’ time, and it highlights the emotion of *La Traviata* perfectly.

Our production design is a co-production between Edmonton Opera, Pacific Opera Victoria, Vancouver Opera, Manitoba Opera and Opéra de Montréal. Each of these opera companies had a hand in the overall look and feel of this production. Here is a sneak peak at the set design with more notes by our Stage Director Alain Gauthier:

**Act I** is set in Violetta’s dressing room in a cabaret theater. This location would first establish that she is an artist, but also that she lives in a world of illusion, where fans, friends and colleagues come and go. In this set up, we will discover how glamorous and famous she is, and how she entertains people after a glorious opening night.



**Act 2, scene 2**, brings us to Flora’s place. I’ve imagined Violetta’s friend being the owner of a cabaret, a little like Maxim’s was at that time in Paris: a place where you could have a drink, eat, meet artists or play cards. The musical number with matadors and bohemians at the beginning of the scene can easily be part of a Spanish theme party that Flora has organised for her patrons.



# PREPARING FOR THE OPERA

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Familiarize yourself with these musical excerpts. Opera is an art form that benefits from familiarity. You don't have to worry about spoilers in opera, the more you know the story and are familiar with the music, the greater your enjoyment of the live production. If you are looking for translations for any of these arias, there is a wonderful Italian website that lists all arias and their English translations: <https://semprelibera.altervista.org/>

### Excerpt 1:

Duet "Libiamo, Libiamo Ne' Lieti Calici," duet sung by Alfredo, tenor and Violetta, soprano

- Possibly the most recognizable and famous duet and chorus piece in the opera, Alfredo is convinced by Gastone and Violetta to show off his voice. He sings a drinking song.

Watch Diana Damrau, Juan Diego Flóres and the Metropolitan Opera Chorus in the Metropolitan Opera's 2018 Live IN HD broadcast perform it here: <https://youtu.be/afhAqMeeQJk>

### Excerpt 2:

Aria "De' miei bollenti spiriti," aria sung by Alfredo, tenor

- Alfredo and Violetta have moved in together. Alfredo sings of his happiness from living with her and of how much she loves him.

Watch René Barbera in the Teatro Massimo, Palermo production from 2017 perform it here:

<https://youtu.be/YHqBBSYJvU4>

### Excerpt 3:

Aria "Amami, Alfredo" sung by Violetta, soprano

- One of the most recognizable arias from *La Traviata*, Violetta expresses honestly to Alfredo how much she loves him but that she must leave him after his father has convinced her to go.

Watch Sonya Yoncheva and Michael Fabiano in the Metropolitan Opera's live presentation in the 2016-17 season perform it here: <https://youtu.be/fyVoQRhFFOg>

### Excerpt 4:

Aria "Addio del passato" aria sung by Violetta, soprano

- Violetta is now poor and about to die. She receives a letter from Alfredo's father saying that Alfredo has discovered why she lied about her love for him and that he is coming to her. She knows that it is too late—and sings a farewell to her happiness with Alfredo.

Watch Pretty Yende in the Opéra National de Paris live presentation in 2019 perform it here:

<https://youtu.be/ir8I-1IZLH8>

### Exercises:

- Try to identify the various operatic voices that you hear in the music. Can you tell the difference between a tenor (Alfredo) and a baritone (Baron Douphol)?
- Discuss the emotions or ideas that are being sung about. Is it clear? How does the melody support these emotions or ideas?
- Close your eyes and listen to the singing and music. What do you feel? Which emotions do you feel when you can't see the singers to take cues from their actions or faces?

# ACTIVITIES & IDEAS TO CONSIDER

With our interest in building new audiences for opera, this is a fine work to whet the developing appetites of neophytes; and the great work of director Gauthier, Dorn and Haji offers much to please the more jaded palettes of the opera cognoscenti.

## 1. Write a review or critique of the performance

One of the best ways to encourage critical thinking of a performing arts production is to encourage students' honesty and draw out detailed opinions. A productive evaluation session—spoken, written, visual or dramatized—should follow this basic 'how-to' outline below.

On the internet, students can find many reviews of *La Traviata* from other opera companies' performances to use as a guideline.

Excerpts from the Vancouver Opera's 2019 production of *La Traviata*

"VO's latest *Traviata* is directed by Alain Gauthier. Aside from an update to the 1920s (uh, just like last season's *La Bohème*), the company presents a rather traditional vision of the story, with its flashy first act, its moral awakening mid-section, and its great get out your handkerchiefs last act. To call Gauthier's version traditional is no criticism: even the bravest rethink of the piece can't get around the social attitudes that drive the story, and Gauthier helps us understand what really matters about the characters as characters, not the antiquated mores of their time. It's all there. High kicks and tight corsets; silk and sequins and shenanigans in a broom closet; hot pinks and still hotter can-can girls; waltzing, scheming, sparring, and a bit with a banquet table. There's even a dancing beaver. So why don't I feel more elated?

The production's *mise en scène* is by Christina Poddubiuk, with sets built by Edmonton Opera and props and costumes created by Pacific Opera Victoria. Two big crowd scenes were appropriately grand, but they (and the Paris in the Twenties conceit) never overwhelmed what is essentially an intimate examination of a doomed relationship.

Gauthier respected the three-act structure determined by Verdi — acknowledging that the master knew best how to pace a three-hour evening.

Conductor Yves Abel's way with the score was efficient and effective (though I might have welcomed a bit more old-school Italian sentimentality). Both chorus and orchestra delivered a solid, respectable performance.

One of the dual stars of the production is tenor Andrew Haji, who brought a good sense of youthful impetuosity to the part of Alfredo. Haji charmed everyone in his first VO performance last year in Donizetti's bel canto masterwork *The Elixir of Love*. He continues to charm with his relaxed stage presence and seemingly effortless vocal style. He is definitely a young singer to watch.

With our interest in building new audiences for opera, this is a fine work to whet the developing appetites of neophytes; and the great work of director Gauthier, Dorn and Haji offers much to please the more jaded palettes of the opera cognoscenti.

## Guidelines for writing a review

When writing a theatre review you must remember the main components: the acting, the singing, the technical, the music and the overall view. The acting and singing are probably the most important aspects of the opera. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the opera and its characters before you see it.

### THE ACTING AND SINGING

Make sure you know all of the characters and the singers who are playing them; this study guide or the Calgary Opera website are ideal places in which to find all this information. Did the singers bring life to the music? What did they do to bring their particular character to life? Could you see and hear the emotion while they sang? Did they interact well with others on stage? Did any particular performer stand out to you? Why? Keep in mind that everyone has a very unique style of acting and maybe comment on that. How well are they giving and taking focus? Is there any one person who sticks out in your head as "hogging" all the attention?

# ACTIVITIES & IDEAS TO CONSIDER CONTINUED

## TECHNICAL ASPECTS

The next aspect to look at is the technical. This includes everything from the lights and sound to the costumes and make-up. How well do you think the set works? Does it help to tell the story?

The costumes and set should portray the time period and part of each character's personality. Do the costumes properly illustrate the story and the characters? The make-up should do the same, but keep a look out for shadows and lines on the face. All these things are very important to the performance of the show. Again, familiarizing yourself with the opera before you go will assist with making these decisions.

## THE MUSIC

The appeal of the music is often a matter of opinion because everyone likes different kinds of music; however, keep in mind the following general concerns:

- the singers' voices should always be heard above the orchestra
- you should be able to hear and understand the text (spoken and sung) if it's in a language you speak
- their singing should sound pleasant, beautiful, and exciting, but never harsh or shrill
- although the music can be quick or slow or in between, it should never rush (feels too fast) or drag (feels too slow)
- the music and the action on stage should match well – the music should help convey the story and the blocking should help bring out the emotional power of the music in this production

The audience is also a major part of your theatre experience. Was the audience big? Did your classmates seem to enjoy the show? Did the singers seem to connect with the audience? Remember, you shouldn't make this the main point, but it would be good to comment on it. This entire portion should convey your opinion and feeling of how the show went.

In conclusion, remember the singing and acting, the technical, and the overall view, and you'll have written a successful theatre review. Oh, and one more thing: don't ever lie so as not to hurt someone's feelings. Constructive criticism can be helpful, as long as you are kind and considerate in your commentary. Keep all these things in mind when writing your review and it will be great. Have fun!

## **2. Engage students in meaningful discussions or debates using the following ideas:**

Violetta as a free woman: societal norms and illness

This story was written in a time when wealthy courtesans were a part of high society and yet, for all their seeming freedom from societal norms, it is those same norms that rob Violetta of her love. Although our Violetta has been reimagined as an entertainer in 1920's Paris, it is safe to say that her situation is no less problematic, as a woman who chooses to have independence from marriage and family in order to be an entertainer in music halls would be looked upon just as poorly.

The question becomes, is Violetta really free? And free from what? Does her lifestyle choice allow her to be free at a time when women were expected to be mothers and home makers? To be financially independent in those days for a woman was revolutionary.

There aren't right or wrong answers but this idea could give way to some interesting conversations in the classroom around who decides if you are free to do as please, society or the individual?

# LANGUAGE OF OPERA & VOICE TYPES

## THE LANGUAGE OF OPERA

**Act**—Main sections of a play or opera

**Aria**—A solo song sung in an opera

**Ballet**—Dance set to music within an Opera, particularly common in French opera

**Blocking**—the precise movement and positioning of actors on a stage in order to facilitate the performance of a play, ballet, film or opera

**Character**—Person who is part of the opera's story

**Chorus**—Music composed for a group of singers or the name of a group of singers in an opera, the chorus support the story

**Conductor**—Person who rehearses and leads the orchestra & the singers in time with each other

**Duet**—A song performed by two singers, usually to set up a relationship between the two or illustrate their differences

**Leitmotif**—A melodic theme associated with a particular character, place, thing or idea in opera or a recurring theme

**Libretto**—the words of the opera

**Opera**—a musical work in one or more acts, made for singers and instrumentalists

**Opera Buffa**—Funny, light opera, Italian in origin

**Opera Seria**—Serious, dramatic opera, Italian in origin

**Operetta**—Light, comic with some spoken dialogues

**Orchestra**—A group of musicians who play together on various musical instruments

**Overture**—A piece of instrumental music played at the beginning of an opera, sets a tone or feeling for the opera and often introduces musical themes that will be heard throughout the work

**Program**—Booklet that contains information about the opera, composer, performers, and the

opera company

**Quartet**—A song performed by four singers, often with an individual story or viewpoint being expressed by each

**Recitative**—Words that are sung in the rhythm of natural speech, serves the purpose of carrying the action of the story forward in a timely manner

**Rehearsal**—Time when singers/actors practice with or without the orchestra; time when musicians practice together with the conductor.

**Répétiteur**—Plays piano for all rehearsals leading up to the opera, prior to the orchestra taking over

**Scene**—Segments of action within the acts of an opera

**Synopsis**—an abbreviated version of the plot or story of the opera or play, written in the program for the audience to familiarize themselves with the action on stage

**Trio**—A song performed by three singers, generally used to illustrate the relationship between the three characters, as in a love triangle, or their differences

## VOICE TYPES

**Soprano**—Highest pitched female voice

**Mezzo-Soprano**—Female voice between soprano and contralto

**Contralto**—Lowest pitched female voice

**Counter-tenor**—the equivalent male form of the contralto, highest pitched male voice

**Tenor**—Second highest pitched male voice

**Baritone**—Male voice between tenor and bass

**Bass**—Lowest pitched male voice



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