



Victorian
Opera

Giuseppe Verdi

LA TRAVIATA

Education Resource

Music



LA TRAVIATA - MUSIC RESOURCE

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: La traviata - Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini © Foto Binci

“A breathtaking production, designed by one of the most influential stage designers of the 20th century whose work has never been seen live in Australia until now.” – Richard Mills

From legendary European designer Josef Svoboda, comes a towering vision of Verdi’s famous opera, dubbed the ‘Traviata of the mirrors’. Through the extraordinary window of a giant mirror, the audience gazes into the life of the ‘fallen woman’. Violetta Valéry is a celebrated courtesan who must choose between her desire for high society and her longing for love. Australian singing revelation Jessica Pratt brings to life the tragic figure of Violetta, a role often considered the pinnacle of soprano repertoire.

La traviata | Giuseppe Verdi
17 – 29 May 2014 | Her Majesty’s Theatre

Sung in Italian with English surtitles. 2 hours and 10 minutes with two intervals.



BACKGROUND

- Opera in three acts
- Libretto - Francesco Maria Piave
- Music- Giuseppe Verdi
- Setting – Paris and surrounding areas
- Based on the play - *La Dame aux Camelias* by Alexandre Dumas Fils

Performances

- Opening Performance – 6th March, 1853 in Venice at the Teatro La Fenice
- It is one of the most widely performed operas.

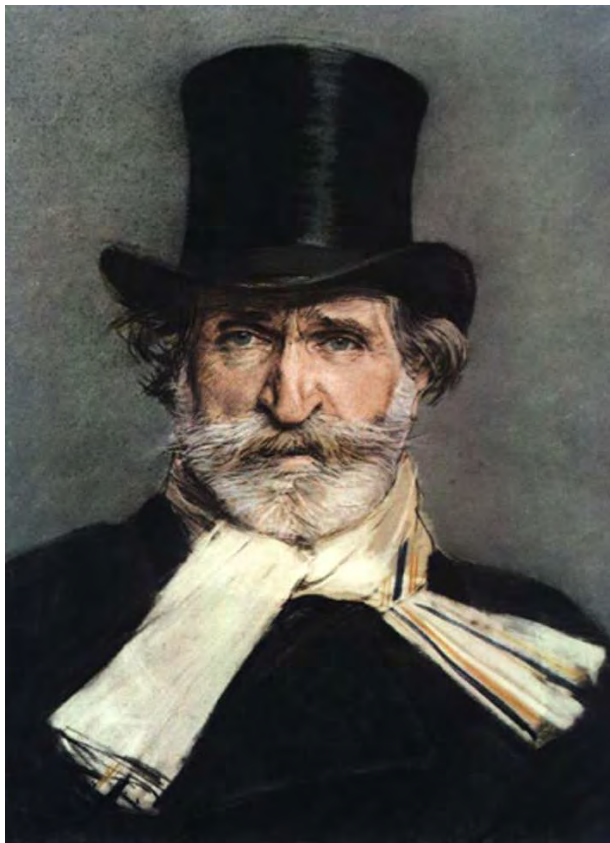


Figure 2: Giuseppe Verdi

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

Giuseppe Verdi (which translates to Jo Green) was born in Roncole, near Busseto in Italy and died in Milan. He wrote over 30 operatic works, in which half are still performed and considered some of the finest repertoire. As a child, he was given lessons in composition and became interested in composing for local theatre. He fell in love with Margherita, the daughter of a town merchant. They married in 1836 and had two children, but unfortunately they both died in infancy, followed by the death of his wife in 1840 which devastated Verdi.

His first opera, *Oberto* was premiered in 1839 which then followed a period of intense hard work. His personal tragedies could be a contributing factor into the emotionally charged and dramatic compositional style. His inspiration was patriotic themes, romantic stories, and contemporary and classic literature including Victor Hugo, Byron and Shakespeare.

He is considered to have brought Italian Opera to its peak through his technique and musical style. Some of these well-known operas include *Macbeth* (1847), *Othello* (1877), *Falstaff* (1883), and *Nabucco* (1842). When Verdi died in 1901 he was admired, revered, and acknowledged as one of the greatest composers Italy had ever produced. His works had virtually monopolised the Italian operatic scene for most of the 19th century.

Definition

Bel Canto – literally means beautiful singing, an 18th Century European style which was in fashion until the 1840s. It is characterized by a legato production of sound, light tones in the upper registers, a flexible technique and graceful phrasing.



La traviata

La traviata is the eighteenth and one of the most famous and performed of Verdi's operas. During that period, he also wrote *Rigoletto* (1851) and *Il Trovatore* (1853).



Figure 3: *La traviata* opening night program

La traviata epitomises great romantic opera with a marriage of the arts - a musical drama full of passion, glorious song, soaring arias, rousing choruses, costumes, large orchestra, and spectacular sets. The opera is based on the play *La Dame aux Camelias* adapted from a novel by Alexander Dumas Fils. It was originally set in the 1770s. The first performance was deemed a failure. The end of the first act was met with applause, but during the second act, the audience began to turn against the performance. There was some scorn casting the 38 year old Fanny

SYNOPSIS

In her Paris salon, the courtesan Violetta Valéry greets party guests, including a new admirer, Alfredo Germont. When they are alone, Alfredo confesses his love. At first Violetta protests that love means nothing to her but something about the young man's sincerity touches her, and they meet again. Some months later Alfredo and Violetta are living in a country house near Paris. Trouble intrudes with the appearance of Alfredo's father who demands she renounce his son: the scandal of Alfredo's affair with Violetta has threatened his daughter's engagement. Violetta reluctantly agrees to leave. Later Alfredo, believing Violetta has thrown him over for another lover, confronts her at the party and denounces her. Six months later, Violetta has tuberculosis and does not have long to live. Alfredo discovering the truth rushes to her bedside. The lovers plan to leave Paris forever but after a last resurgence of strength Violetta falls dead at her lover's feet.

Salcivini-Donatelli in the lead role of Violetta. With a revision of the score and updated casting, it was subsequently performed in 1855 in Venice, London, New York as well as Paris in 1856. Here, it gained popularity to the standard operative repertoire. Today it is one of the most popular opera of all times.

The title *La traviata* can be translated as 'the Lost One', or 'the fallen woman'. The plot centres around Violetta's affair with Alfredo. Verdi adheres to the ideal of opera as human drama which he conveys by means of a direct vocal melody. He also utilises the operatic forces of recitatives, arias and choruses. There are solos, duets, ensembles and choruses.

His libretti are not only emotionally charged, they are melodramatic, exploring the strongest human emotions, that is, love and death.

These are manifested in his music through expressive melodies, virtuosic vocal melodies, rich harmonies, full orchestration and utilisation of the poetry into drama. Some of the arias are more intimate in nature with an expressive, flexible and semi-declamatory style. *La traviata* is in three acts, divided into scenes.





Figure 5: Jessica Pratt (Violetta) © Martin Philbey



Figure 4: Richard Mills (Conductor) © Charlie Kinross

CAST LIST

Violetta Valéry	<i>a courtesan</i>	soprano
Flora Bervoix	<i>her friend</i>	mezzo-soprano
Baron Douphol	<i>Violetta's protector</i>	baritone
Marquis D'Obigny	<i>friend of Flora</i>	bass
Doctor Grenvil		bass
Gaston, Vicomte de Létorères		tenor
Alfredo Germont		tenor
Annina	<i>Violetta's maid</i>	soprano
Giuseppe	<i>Violetta's servant</i>	tenor
Giorgio Germont	<i>Alfredo's father</i>	baritone
Servant of Flora		bass
Messenger		bass

Ladies and gentlemen, friends of Violetta and Flora, matadors, picadors, gypsies, servants of Violetta and Flora, masquers, dancers.

ORCHESTRA

Piccolo/flute
Flute
2 oboes
2 clarinets
2 bassoons
4 horns
2 trumpets
3 trombones
Cimbasso
Timpani
Cassa
Triangle
Tambourines
Pikes
Banda
Harp
Strings



PRE-VISIT EXPLORATION



Figure 6: La traviata - Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini © Foto Binci

What to expect before, during and after your opera experience.

To gain the most from your opera experience it is highly recommended to study the work, discover its inspiration, learn about the composers and explore the main themes. The following educational resources will provide you with information about the work, what to expect during your opera experience and post opera reflection. Most of the information is included here in the pre-visit exploration section which of course can be re-visited during and after the opera experience.

ACTIVITY 1

- What is an opera?
- What is an overture?
- What is a recitative?
- What is an aria?
- What is an operatic chorus?
- What is an overture?
- What is your voice type? E.g. soprano, alto, contralto, tenor, baritone, bass

- What are the purposes of scenery, costumes, lighting?

ACTIVITY 2

- Read the story of *La traviata*. Who are the main characters? How does the plot relate to modern day life and stories in the media?
- Find some pictures and read the history of opera theatres where Verdi's operas have been performed. Have a look at La Scala in Milan, Arena Verona in Verona, The Lincoln Centre in New York City, Opera National de Paris, the Sydney Opera House, Covent Garden in London, Winener Staatsoper, and the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow. Why are these theatres so decadent?
- There have been 460 performances at Convent Garden, 793 performances at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and 650 in Vienna at the Vienna Hof and Staatoper and 601 at the Berlin Hof. Why do you think it has been so immensely popular?
- In which Australian theatres has *La Traviata* been performed in?
- Dame Joan Sutherland (1926-2010) was one of Australia's opera singers who have sung the role of Violetta. Research her life and operatic accomplishments.
- Listen to some of the 'hits' from Verdi's operas. These include; 'Grand March' from *Aida*, 'Anvil Chorus' from *Il Trovatore* and 'Va Pensiro' from *Nabucco*. Verdi's operas continue to be performed around the world are immensely popular. Why do you think this is the case?



LISTEN



Figure 7: La Traviata - Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini © Foto Binci

Listen to the following three excerpts selected for study. These all occur in Act One as they are the most well-known and famous musical examples from the opera. Once this has enticed you, you are encouraged to listen through the entire opera.

A [Prelude](#) to an opera is usually designed to set up the mood and drama of the opera.

ACTIVITY 3

- What kind of mood does this Prelude convey? How is this achieved? Consider the choice of tempo, dynamic, instrumentation, the shape of the melodic line, and tonality.
- Which instruments feature in the prelude?
- How would you describe the melody?

Bars	Features
1 - 16	Key signature E major, Common time. Strings
Section A	Marked Adagio, ppp. Sets the mood for what is to come. Slow moving block chords in strings. Quite chromatic.
17 – 28	Horn and bass added. Marked 'with expression' Descending 8 bar melody in octaves in strings over rhythmic bass in quavers.
25 – 28	Link featuring tremolos in bass
29 – 50	Continuous semiquaver passages in octaves in upper strings marked staccato over chordal bass.



ACTIVITY 4

Follow the sections below (in English translation) as you listen to the recording.

Act One - '[Libiamo ne'lieti calici'](#) (Brindisi) – Alfredo, Violetta, Guests

Introduction - Bars 1 – 21 – Allegretto. B flat major, 3/8 time.

Section A

Alfredo

Let's drink, - yes, let's drink to the glorious pleasure of life, of enchantment of beauty: I sing the passion, the thrill of youth – that can set the world a flame.

I drink to love's sweet ecstasy that fills the soul with wonder,
To eyes so brightly alluring, they set my heart on fire –

So join me, dear comrades, dear friends,
and drink – to the glory and power of love

Section B

Chorus

Ah- let's raise our cups to love, ah! Let us raise our cups to love

Section C

Violetta

Dear friends – dear friends, let us fill the night with the sound of carousing and laughter,
Life is but folly yes, folly and grief, so live for this moment of bliss.
Then drink and feast so joyously for life and youth are fleeting;
And love itself 's a flower that fades too soon and dies – So take what moments of
Pleasure grant, let us find out hope in this.

Section D

Chorus

Ah we drink to the pleasure and joys of life,
to this night of carousing and laughter
We'll take, yes, we'll take what bliss will grant,
let us find all out hope in this

Section E Duet

Violetta

I ask for only pleasure

Alfredo

Yet love is more enduring

Violetta

My heart remains indifferent

Alfredo

And mine calls out for love

Final Chorus

We drink to the pleasures of wine and song –
to this night of carousing and laughter:
We'll take – we'll take what bliss will grant,
let us find all our hope in this,
Ah! Our hope's in this, ah! – ah! – our
hope's in this, yes we'll find all our hopes, all
our hope in this.

- What is the overall mood of this aria? Serious? Tragic? Happy?
- What type of dance does it suggest to you?
- How many times are the verse and chorus repeated?
- What kind of voices are singing?
- Going out for a drink with friends was a popular pastime in Europe during the nineteenth century. How much have our social lives changed?
- Listen to a recording and sing along with the chorus.





Figure 8: La Traviata - Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini © Foto Binci

ACTIVITY 5

Follow the sections below (in English translation) as you listen to the recording.

'È Strano è strano' – How curious! How curious!! – Violetta

This is sung by Violetta where she demonstrates the compositional operatic styles of Recitativo, Arias arioso, and embellished cadenzas.

Section A

È Strano è strano – How curious! How curious!!

Recitativo: C major, Common time marked allegro

Note the way the storyline is forwarded by unaccompanied speech-like singing with orchestra interjections between the sentences.

Section B

Ah forse lui quest'anima - Oh, can it be I dreamed of him

Aria - F minor, 3/8 time Andantino.
Concludes with 23 semi-quavers on the vowel ah!

Section C

Follie follie - What folly! what folly!

Arioso – accompanied recitative. Allegro F major common time concluding with more melismatic passages.

Section D

Sempre li be radegg'io – Let me live in fancy free and roam at will from pleasure to pleasure.

Aria – Allegro brillante – A flat major in 6/8 time

- What is a recitative and what is the role of the recitative? Is the storyline moved along here?
- What is an aria, arioso? How smooth and melodic is the aria?
- What is a cadenza? How is an operatic cadenza different to an orchestral cadenza?
- In the twenty first century, women can have successful work careers. What was the situation for women in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe? Do you believe that Violetta is a victim of her circumstances?
- At the end of the opera, Violetta dies from consumption (tuberculosis). This was a common disease in the nineteenth century. Chopin, Keats and Boccherini were a few artists who suffered from it. Why was consumption such a tragic way to die? What is the cure?



DURING YOUR OPERA EXPERIENCE



Figure 9: *La traviata* - Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini © Foto Binci

During the performance, reflect on how the storyline is represented. Can you recognise the characters, or have they been modernised? Has this production followed the conventional costumes, lighting and scenery you viewed prior to attending? Listen to the music and how it blends with the singers. Take note of the audience's reaction around you, the emotion they are sharing with the performers, and how the performers respond to the audience. Most importantly, enjoy the performance and all it has to offer.

- What is the theatre like?
- Who attended the performance? How did the audience respond to the opera?
- Could you follow the storyline in Italian?
- Were the surtitles helpful?



POST VISIT REFLECTION

Visit the *La traviata* 'Wall' to explore the behind-the-scenes, read the blogs and watch the timelapse videos of the design online victorianopera.com.au/latraviata.


The Wall

COUNTDOWN


22 DAYS TIL OPENING NIGHT....
[BOOK NOW >](#)

DISCOVER LA TRAVIATA

Get up close and personal with the team from *La traviata*. Learn about the creative process, including a short performance and Q&A session. Monday 28 April, 6pm, The Wheeler Centre. [Find out more >](#)




LA TRAVIATA COMES TO LIFE!




WHEN RICHARD MET JESSICA

Richard Mills recently caught up with Australian soprano Jessica Pratt following her triumph in Lucia di Lammermoor at Milans' famous La Scala theatre. [Read the blog here >](#)



THE SITES OF JESI



Master of Music (Opera Performance) student blogpost

After the performance, reflect on what you have experienced. Also discuss this with your peers. What did you like best about the performance? Who was the most memorable performer? Who was your favourite character and was this different to your expectation? What surprised you? If you were a critic for a newspaper, what would you write? Do you think their responses would be different if it was premiered in 2014?

- Who was the most memorable character? Why?
- What type of scenery was used?
- What were the costumes like?

Read the reviews from the critics. An article is usually published in the newspapers a few days after opening night. There may also be reviews in other print media, radio, TV and online.

- What did the critics write about this performance?
- Do you agree with the critics? If you were a critic what would you write?



EXTEND YOUR OPERA EXPERIENCE

Visit our website to explore behind-the-scenes, sign up to workshops and browse through our resources online victorianopera.com.au/education.

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- twitter.com/victorianopera
- instagram.com/victorianopera
- youtube.com/victorianoperapage
- victorianopera.com.au/education
- victorianopera.com.au/blog

CONTACT US

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Thanks

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Victorian
Opera

Giuseppe Verdi

LA TRAVIATA

Education Resource
Theatre Studies



LA TRAVIATA - THEATRE STUDIES RESOURCE

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: La Traviata - Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini © Foto Binci

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La traviata | Giuseppe Verdi

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OVERVIEW

Music composed by Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, after the play *La dame aux camélias* (The Lady of the Camélias) by Alexandre Dumas Fils.

EXPLORING THE OPERATIC FORM AS A THEATRE STUDIES STUDENT

As a student of theatre the more diverse experiences you have, the greater the understanding you will gain with regard to the theatre forms that shape contemporary performance. Opera is a unique art form and one that uses many conventions similar to more traditional theatre performance such as narrative, characters, ensemble, drama, climax, and detailed stagecraft.

PRE-MODERN THEATRE

Opera as a theatrical style belongs in the era of Pre-modern Theatre. As a student of Theatre Studies, opera is a distinct style to which you can apply the following Key Knowledge:

- The nature of theatrical and performance analysis
- The ways in which an audience constructs meaning from a theatrical performance
- How theatrical interpretations are informed by the contexts of the playscript (libretto)
- Theatrical styles used to shape a performance
- Acting techniques applied to a play in performance
- Establishment and maintenance of actor–audience relationship
- The use of stagecraft to support and enhance acting

WHAT IS OPERA?

Opera is an art form in which singers and musicians perform a dramatic story. It includes text, called 'libretto', and a musical score. Opera as an art form has its origins in Italy in the late 16th Century. The Italian word *opera* means "work", both in the sense of the labour done and the result produced. Opera is the plural of the word *opus*. In opera there is often a large chorus, as well as key characters. The stories are told through solos, duets, ensembles and chorus work.

OPERA VOICE TYPES:

In opera, there are traditional voice 'types', and a singer's voice type or range usually means they will choose a repertoire that suits their voice range.

Female voices:

Soprano (highest in range), Mezzo-Soprano (mid-range), Contralto (lowest range)

Male voices:

Countertenor (highest in range), Tenor (high range), Baritone (mid-range), Bass (lowest range)





Figure 2: Salon, La Traviata - Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini © Foto Binci

SETTING AND STRUCTURE

La traviata (The fallen Woman) was first performed in Venice in 1853. It has three settings. The first is the salon (living room) in the heroine, Violetta's house. The second setting is Violetta's country house outside of Paris. The final setting is Violetta's bedroom.

Each of the settings is an 'Act' in the opera and traditionally each setting would be lavishly recreated on stage.

The musical structure of the piece includes an **overture** as well as **recitative** moments, **arias** and **operatic chorus**.

In opera, the music drives the story. The story is, in fact, the musical composition. Therefore, in opera, the performers, the conductor and the orchestra work as one to create the performance.

WHAT STORIES DOES OPERA TELL?

Most stories told through the form of opera are highly dramatic and often tragic. They deal with human drama and human emotions such as love, betrayal, conflict and often death. *La traviata* is a highly dramatic opera, one of love, intrigue and tragedy.

STAGING OPERA IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Many operas are performed in their original language – Italian, French, or German. In contemporary performance, theatres often use **surtitles**, translations of the sung language into the language of the local audience. Surtitles are generally projected above or beside the performance on small screens.

The characters

Violetta Valéry, a courtesan
Alfredo Germont, a young bourgeois (middle class) man from a provincial family
Georgio Germont, Alfredo's father
Flora Bervoix, Violetta's friend
Annina, Violetta's maid
Barone Douphol, Violetta's protector

Marchese d'Obigny. Friend of Flora
Dottore Grenvil, a doctor who attends Violetta
Gaston Vicomte de Letoreres
Giuseppe, Violetta's servant
Flora's servant
Messenger



SYNOPSIS

In her Paris salon, the courtesan Violetta Valéry greets party guests, including a new admirer, Alfredo Germont. When they are alone, Alfredo confesses his love. At first Violetta protests that love means nothing to her but something about the young man's sincerity touches her, and they meet again. Some months later Alfredo and Violetta are living in a country house near Paris. Trouble intrudes with the appearance of Alfredo's father who demands she renounce his son: the scandal of Alfredo's affair with Violetta has threatened his daughter's engagement. Violetta reluctantly agrees to leave. Later Alfredo, believing Violetta has thrown him over for another lover, confronts her at the party and denounces her. Six months later, Violetta has tuberculosis and does not have long to live. Alfredo discovering the truth rushes to her bedside. The lovers plan to leave Paris forever but after a last resurgence of strength Violetta falls dead at her lover's feet.



Figure 3: Giuseppe Verdi

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)

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Verdi's first opera, *Oberto* premiered in 1839. This was followed by an intense period of hard work. It is believed that Verdi's personal tragedies were a contributing factor in the emotionally charged and dramatic compositional style he developed. Verdi's inspiration was patriotic themes, romantic stories, and contemporary and classic literature including drawing inspiration from Victor Hugo, Byron and Shakespeare.

He is considered to have brought Italian Opera to its peak through his technique and musical style.

Some of Verdi's well-known operas include *Macbeth* (1847), *Otello* (1877), *Falstaff* (1883), and *Nabucco* (1842). When Verdi died in 1901 he was admired, revered, and acknowledged as one of the greatest composers Italy had ever produced. His works had virtually monopolised the Italian operatic scene for most of the nineteenth century.

Want to know what some opera terms mean?

<http://www.operaamerica.org/content/education/learningCenter/glossary.aspx>



PRE-VISIT EXPLORATION

1. RESEARCH AND FAMILIARISATION

Seeing opera for the first time can be quite challenging. In its day, opera was a highly popular art form attended by all classes of people. It was the popular culture of its time offering grand stories, glorious music and rich design. Attendees understood its conventions and performance elements. However, contemporary Australians are less familiar with opera. In order to prepare yourself to see *La traviata*, we invite you to do some research:

- Read the story of *La traviata*, its creation, its narrative and the characters:
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/603665/La-traviata>
- Watch a performance:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-jHlfm3_oI
- Explore some images of various interpretations of *La traviata*:
<http://goo.gl/FrQdvp>

2. QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER BEFORE WATCHING LA TRAVIATA

- From your research, what do you anticipate the performance of *La traviata* will be like?
- Why do you think opera is still performed?
- Have you ever watched a performance that had 'surtitles' or 'subtitles'?
- How do you imagine surtitles will impact on the audience?
- What do you imagine the characters of Violetta and Alfredo will be like?
- What is a 'courtesan'?
- Who might Violetta and Alfredo be in a 21st century context?

Victorian Opera has set itself apart from other opera companies with a program that ventures beyond the traditional repertoire, but has chosen one of the world's most popular operas for its season this year.

Verdi's *La traviata*, a mainstay of opera houses everywhere, will be presented by the Melbourne-based company this May 2014, in a 1992 production by Czech designer Josef Svoboda.

Known as the "Traviata of the Mirrors", the production uses a large mirror suspended above the stage to enhance its visual splendour and add a moral perspective.

"The mirrors are a reflection of Violetta and her world. At the end, the audience sees a reflection of themselves, their own lives and hypocrisies."

Richard Mills, Artistic Director

Article from *The Australian* on this Production

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/stage/violetta-through-the-looking-glass/story-fn9d344c-1226706003795>

Josef Svoboda – 1992 production of *La Traviata*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gfvvlvkSHw>



POST- PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION



Figure 5: Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini - La Traviata © Foto Binci



Figure 4: Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini - La Traviata © Foto Binci

THEATRICAL STYLES

- Opera is a unique theatrical style. However, what conventions of other theatrical styles did you see in *La Traviata*? Discuss specific examples.
- Were there elements of naturalistic acting?
- Was there melodrama?
- Were there aspects of comedy?
- Were there heightened emotional moments?

INTERPRETATION

- From your research and reading of the libretto, how was this production interpreted to the stage?
- Did the interpretation seem traditional?
- Was the story recontextualised and to what time and era?
- Was this recontextualising effective?
- Is *La Traviata* a story that transfers to the 21st century or is it too old-fashioned?



MEANING

From your viewing of the performance think about how meaning was conveyed and how you, as an audience member, understood what you were seeing and hearing.

Music:

- How did the music create mood, atmosphere, and emotional response?
- Select some key moments of drama or heightened emotion and describe them.
- How did the music drive the story?
- Did the music reflect the era in which the story was set?
- Did the music reflect any recontextualising choices or was meaning lost?

Direction:

- What directorial choices were made that allowed you to make sense of the story?
- How did the directorial choices enable you to get to know the characters?
- Did the directorial choices create specific actor/audience relationships?
- How did the directorial choices allow for ensemble and chorus moments?
- How effective were the directorial choices in the more intimate moments?

Acting:

- Violetta and Alfredo are the main characters in the opera
- How did the performers use their expressive skills to portray these characters?
- How would you describe the theatrical styles used to express and convey these characters?
- How did the music and singing contribute to creating the characters and building the relationships between them?

Themes:

- What do you think are the key themes or concerns of La traviata?
- Are these universal themes? Do they carry across time, culture and identity?
- Were the themes clearly conveyed?



STAGECRAFT AND DESIGN

Set & Properties

- Describe the set design including fixed and moving elements
- How does this production make use of 'theatre technologies'? What are they?
- How would you describe the aesthetic of the design?
- What textures and tones does the design have?
- How would you describe the theatre configuration e.g. Proscenium, end on, thrust, arena?
- Does the design reflect the original contexts of the opera or does it reflect a new interpretation?
- Make a list of key props that you can recall.
- Which characters used them?
- Were some props frequently used?
- Did some props take on symbolic meaning?

Costume, Hair and Makeup

Select two characters from the production of *La Traviata*.

- Describe their costume/s in as much detail as possible
- Consider: colour palette, silhouette, texture, form, representation
- Discuss how hair and make-up complemented costume
- How effective was costume, make-up and hair design in assisting to create the characters?
- What do you consider were the practical choices made about costume in this production?

Lighting

- Theatre lighting traditionally functions to light the actors and the setting
- What particular lighting states do you recall?
- For example, the three settings in *La Traviata* are all interior settings.
- Were there different lighting states within these settings?
- Did lighting help to create mood or atmosphere?
- Did lighting differ during chorus/ensemble moments?
- How did lighting enhance the mood and atmosphere of the final scene with Violetta and Alfredo?
- Did the lighting reflect the interpretation? For instance if the setting is 1850s France, was the lighting complementary to that?

Music/Singing:

- Opera is sung!
- Discuss in detail how the singing of a story impacted on your understanding of the narrative
- Did listening to a sung narrative prove challenging?
- How did the singing help to establish characters, relationships and emotions?

Finally, Victorian Opera hopes you enjoy *La Traviata*. It may be your first opera experience but hopefully not your last. Opera is a rich theatrical style to experience as part of your studies in theatre and drama.



POST VISIT REFLECTION

Visit the *La traviata* 'Wall' to explore the behind-the-scenes, read the blogs and watch the timelapse videos of the design online victorianopera.com.au/latraviata.


The Wall

COUNTDOWN


22 DAYS TIL OPENING NIGHT....
[BOOK NOW >](#)

DISCOVER LA TRAVIATA

Get up close and personal with the team from *La traviata*. Learn about the creative process, including a short performance and Q&A session. Monday 28 April, 6pm, The Wheeler Centre. [Find out more >](#)




LA TRAVIATA COMES TO LIFE!




WHEN RICHARD MET JESSICA

Richard Mills recently caught up with Australian soprano Jessica Pratt following her triumph in Lucia di Lammermoor at Milans' famous La Scala theatre. [Read the blog here >](#)



THE SITES OF JESI



Master of Music (Opera Performance) student blogpost

After the performance, reflect on what you have experienced. Also discuss this with your peers. What did you like best about the performance? Who was the most memorable performer? Who was your favourite character and was this different to your expectation? What surprised you? If you were a critic for a newspaper, what would you write? Do you think their responses would be different if it was premiered in 2014?

- Who was the most memorable character? Why?
- What type of scenery was used?
- What were the costumes like

Read the reviews from the critics. An article is usually published in the newspapers a few days after opening night. There may also be reviews in other print media, radio, tv and online.

- What did the critics write about this performance?
- Do you agree with the critics? If you were a critic what would you write?



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Thanks

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 Victorian Opera Education Syndicate.

La traviata is presented in association with Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini





Victorian
Opera

Giuseppe Verdi

LA TRAVIATA

Education Resource

Italian Language



LA TRAVIATA - ITALIAN LANGUAGE EXTENSION AND COMPREHENSION

INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: La traviata - Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini © Foto Binci

“A breathtaking production, designed by one of the most influential stage designers of the 20th century whose work has never been seen live in Australia until now.” – Richard Mills

From legendary European designer Josef Svoboda, comes a towering vision of Verdi’s famous opera, dubbed the ‘Traviata of the mirrors’. Through the extraordinary window of a giant mirror, the audience gazes into the life of the ‘fallen woman’. Violetta Valéry is a celebrated courtesan who must choose between her desire for high society and her longing for love. Australian singing revelation Jessica Pratt brings to life the tragic figure of Violetta, a role often considered the pinnacle of soprano repertoire.

La traviata | Giuseppe Verdi
17 – 29 May 2014 | Her Majesty’s Theatre

Sung in Italian with English surtitles. 2 hours and 10 minutes with two intervals.



VERDI – UNA BREVE BIOGRAFIA

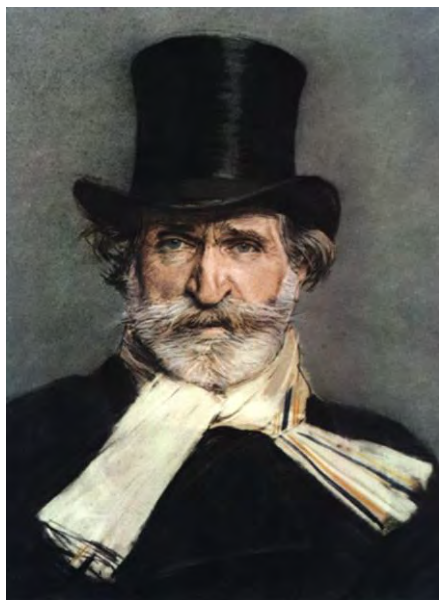


Figure 2: Giuseppe Verdi

Verdi nasce vicino a Busseto tra la città di Parma e il Po, nel 1813, durante il regno di Napoleone. La sua famiglia è povera ma ciò nonostante il piccolo Verdi ha contatti con la musica nell'osteria del padre in cui spesso si esibiscono bande musicali. Il suo talento innato per la musica viene riconosciuto da alcune persone importanti del paese che gli procurano una borsa di studio. Il diciannovenne va a Milano, dominata dagli Austriaci in quel periodo, dove studia con un maestro privato di musica e conosce la Scala e, di conseguenza, lo stile di musica che domina in quegli anni. Senza risorse economiche, a parte la modesta borsa di studio, rinuncia a Milano nel 1836, sposa la figlia del suo protettore e torna a Busseto dove fa il Maestro di Cappella.

Il richiamo di Milano rimane troppo forte e, dopo un paio di anni e la morte della prima figlia, ci torna con la famiglia in condizioni economiche molto estreme. Un anno dopo muore il secondo figlio. Nel 1839 la prima opera di Verdi,

Oberto, debutta a Milano portandogli successo e denaro. Tragicamente, nel 1840 muore anche la moglie di Verdi il quale rimasto solo entra in una fase di depressione.

Dopo questo periodo difficile, Verdi torna a comporre convinto dalla qualità del libretto del Nabucco. L'opera esordisce nel 1842 ed è un successo clamoroso. La protagonista è la soprano, Giuseppina Strapponi, per cui Verdi scriverà molte delle sue opere e che sarà poi la seconda compagna della sua vita.

Negli anni 40 (dell'Ottocento) Verdi mette in scena, come compositore e anche regista, una diecina di opere che criticano in modo sottile il regime austriaco. Gli anni della maturità stilistica vedono arrivare opere come Rigoletto (1851), Il trovatore (1853), La traviata (1853) e altri capolavori come La forza del destino (1860) e Don Carlo (1867). Ormai, Verdi è famoso in tutta Europa e nel 1871 gli è chiesto di comporre Aida per celebrare l'apertura del Canale di Suez. Verso la fine della sua vita giungono altri due capolavori, Otello (1887) e Falstaff (1893), ultime due delle molte opere che Verdi ha tratto da Shakespeare. Verdi muore a Milano nel 1901.

Comprensione

Vero o falso?	Vero	Falso
Da bambino Verdi prende lezioni di musica		
Ottiene una borsa di studio per andare a Milano		
Torna a Busseto dove sposa la figlia del sindaco		
Tornato a Milano, compone opere provocatorie		
Verdi è famoso solo in Italia durante la sua vita		



VERDI E LA MUSICA

La musica di Verdi da voce al bisogno romantico di sentimento forte. Attraverso le tante opere tratte da Shakespeare recupera il mitico medioevo ma, musicalmente, a differenza dell'altro compositore importante dello stesso periodo – Richard Wagner, lo fa usando le antiche melodie della tradizione italiana. Mentre Wagner è un musicista rivolto al futuro che usa orchestre sempre più grandi e inventa soluzioni musicali nuove, Verdi opta per orchestre ridotte e la povertà dell'uso orchestrale quasi crea disagio e scandalo. I preludi della Traviata sono affidati solo a pochi archi, in tanti casi Violetta dialoga con un solo strumento e per intere arie l'orchestra non fa altro che il ritmo base – lo «zum-pa-pà» della musica dei contadini italiani. È chiaro che a Verdi piacesse sentire il canto e la melodia. Per questo motivo, limita l'orchestra al ruolo di sottolineare le cose in modo discreto.

Comprensione

Qual è la differenza tra la musica di Wagner e quella di Verdi?
What is the difference between the music of Wagner and that of Verdi?

LA TRAVIATA

La Traviata è una provocazione in più sensi. Linguisticamente, il titolo stesso è provocatorio. Nella migliore delle ipotesi la parola «traviata» vuol dire «una persona moralmente guasta» ma, all'epoca di Verdi suonava quasi come una parolaccia per descrivere una donna di facili costumi. Il pubblico dell'800 era abituato ad opere che raccontavano favole ambientate in un passato lontano e mitico con personaggi come principi, regine ed eroi e scenografie e costumi ispirati da un passato inesistente. La Traviata, invece, racconta un evento della Parigi di quel tempo, basato sul libro di Alexandre Dumas figlio, con protagonisti e ambienti conosciuti direttamente dal pubblico. In un certo senso, Verdi cancellò la distanza tra palcoscenico e spettatori. Questa provocazione creò un fiasco durante l'esordio dell'opera alla Fenice (a Venezia). Per la seconda rappresentazione la storia venne anticipata di un secolo e ambientata in una Parigi fiabesca. Questa versione ebbe successo a Roma e assicurò il trionfo dell'opera come uno dei melodrammi più famosi ed eseguiti al mondo.

Comprensione

Quali sono le differenze tra La Traviata e l'opera tradizionale? - completare la tabella
What are the differences between La Traviata and traditional opera? – complete the table

	Opera tradizionale	La Traviata
Titolo		
Trama		
Personaggi		



LA LINGUA OPERISTICA



Figure 3: Fondazione Pergolesi Spontini - La Traviata © Foto Binci

Considerare il seguente testo tratto dall'inizio del brindisi

- Com'è l'italiano? Come lo descriveresti?
- Cosa succede alle parole? E alle frasi?

Consider the following text taken from the opening of the toast

- *What is the Italian like? How would you describe it?*
- *What is happening to the words, and the sentences?*

Libiamo, libiamo ne' lieti calici
che la bellezza infiora.
E la fuggevol ora s'inebri a voluttà
Libiam ne' dolci fremiti
che suscita l'amore,
poiché quell'occhio al core
onnipotente va.
Libiamo, amore, amor fra i calici
più caldi baci avrà

Nei testi operistici è molto comune l'apocope
cioè la caduta di una vocale (o una sillaba)
finale:
libiamo → libiam
fuggevole → fuggevol
amore → amor
nei → ne'

I testi dei libretti usano un linguaggio poetico
per cui troviamo varianti lessicali come core
invece di cuore. Poi, le frasi sono spesso
spezzate o riordinate rispetto all'ordine
normale.

Traslitterazione del testo

Brindiamo, brindiamo nei calici felici,
che sono resi più belli dalla bellezza (di
Violetta),
e così il tempo che fugge si ubriachi di
piacere
Brindiamo ai dolci brividi
suscitati dall'amore
perché il suo sguardo
onnipotente arriva
fino al cuore.
Brindiamo perché l'Amore
avrà baci più appassionati
quando sono dati tra i calici.



GLOSSARIO

Italiano	Inglese
l'opera – il melodramma	opera
compositore	composer
regista	director
scenografia	set design
libretto	libretto – the text on which an opera is based
archi	string section (of the orchestra)
legni	woodwind section
ottoni	brass section
percussioni	percussion section
direttore/maestro d'orchestra	conductor
cantante lirico/a	opera singer
soprano (il o la)	soprano
contralto (il o la)	contralto
mezzosoprano (il o la)	mezzosoprano
tenore	tenor
baritono	baritone
basso	bass
coro	choir
La Scala	opera house in Milan
La Fenice	opera house in Venice
protagonista (il o la)	main character
personaggio	character
palcoscenico	stage
golfo mistico o buca d'orchestra	orchestra pit

Riferimento bibliografico

Foscati, D. (ed.) 2005. Giuseppe Verdi. La Traviata. Guerra Edizioni.



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