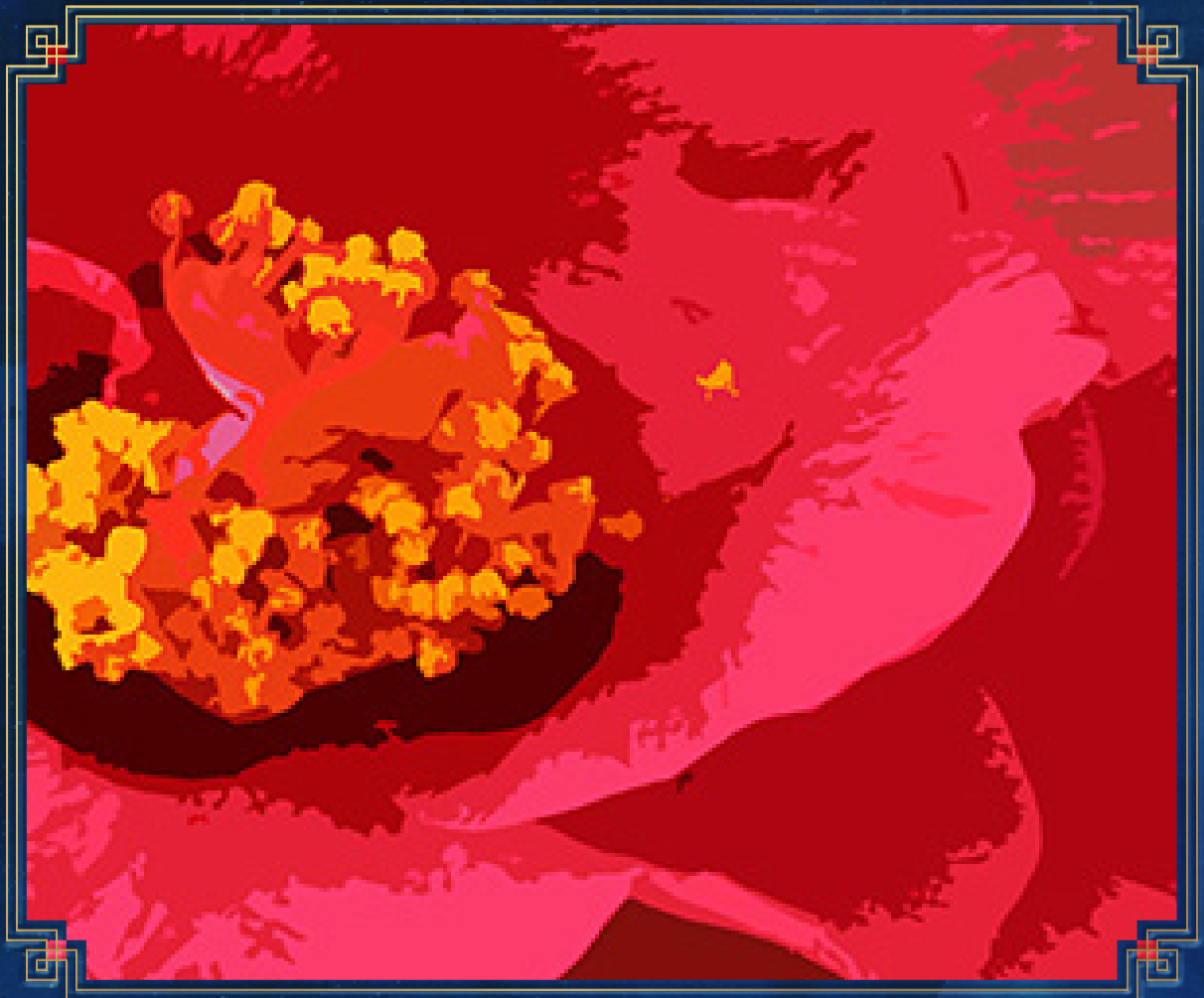




2018-19 SEASON  
*for*  
Young People

Performance Guidebook

*La Traviata*  
Nashville Opera



*presented by*



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For 135 years Regions has been proud to be a part of the Middle Tennessee community, growing and thriving as our region has. From the opening of our doors on September 1, 1883, we have committed to this community and our customers.

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## Thank you, teachers,

for giving your students this wonderful experience. You are creating memories of a lifetime, and Regions is proud to be able to help make this opportunity possible.



**2018-19 SEASON  
for  
Young People**

## Dear Teachers~

We are so pleased to be able to partner with Nashville Opera to bring students to the invited dress rehearsal of *La Traviata*.

We thank Nashville Opera for the use of their extensive study guide for adults. It will help you prepare your students for the performance with a synopsis, opera background, and musical information.

Additional information and short explorations are included for you to share with students.

Please look particularly at the opera rehearsal information, which will help students understand the special factors present in an invited dress rehearsal.

Enjoy!

TPAC *Education*

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**Nashville Opera Guidebook written by Anna Young and Cara Schneider**  
TPAC Guidebook compiled by Lattie Brown

*Salon de Madame Geoffrin*  
by Anicet Charles Gabriel Lemonnier





# Opera Dress Rehearsal

Most final dress rehearsals are almost exactly like a performance. The director will stop the action if needed, but it is exceedingly rare and generally only for a technical malfunction on the stage. Like theatre, an opera dress rehearsal is the final chance before the performance to make a complicated collaboration come together seamlessly.

## In the Studio

The Nashville Opera's rehearsal schedule begins with two weeks at the opera rehearsal space in the new Noah Liff Opera Center. Stage action is mapped out, the performers experiment with their characters, and the director's ideas for the flow of the opera are shared with the cast. The time period may seem short for such a large production.

It only works because opera singers begin rehearsals knowing every bit of their music by heart and having rehearsed it themselves over a period of months, sometimes years. If they do not know the role on the first day, the director has the right to replace them immediately. The opera company will fly in a new singer to take over their part. Once opera singers learn a particular role, they keep it in their repertory and play the role many more times at different opera companies around the world.

## In the Theater

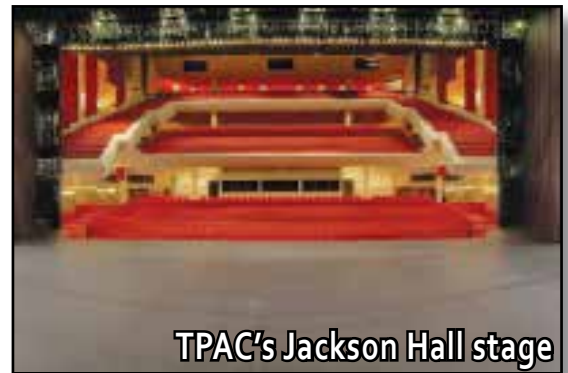
Four to five days before the first performance, the set is "loaded in" to the theater, and the lights are hung and focused. Students will notice a table in the middle of the orchestra level seats for the stage manager, the director, and the designers.

This serves as a central location for communicating with the singers and crew onstage, the conductor in the orchestra pit, and the technicians in the lighting booth. During the final dress rehearsal, students may notice lighting changes as the designer makes final adjustments.

## Technical Rehearsals and Dress Rehearsals

Opera rehearsals use a skilled piano accompanist, but once the company moves into the theater,

the performers will have a *Sitzprobe* rehearsal (a German word meaning to sit and try out.) The *Sitzprobe* is a "sing-thru" with the orchestra and conductor, concentrating on the nuances of the music only without staging. It is the first time that the orchestra and singers put together the work that they have been doing in separate orchestra rehearsals and staging rehearsals.



TPAC's Jackson Hall stage

A piano tech rehearsal is held without costumes to let the singers get used to the set and give the set crew their first chance to practice scene changes. The next rehearsal is a piano dress rehearsal that adds costumes. Finally, the orchestra dress rehearsal puts all the elements together: lighting, set changes, costumes, the orchestra, and the supertitles (the English translations of the lyrics, called the libretto.) The supertitles will be in operation at the final invited dress rehearsal.

## Final Dress

The final dress rehearsal allows the last polish before the performance, and invited dress rehearsals add the final important element to the opera, an audience. Because of the strenuous nature of the singing, a singer may choose to "mark" on the final dress rehearsal in order to preserve their voices for all the performances. "Marking" does not have the same meaning in opera as it does in theatre. In theatre, it means just going through the blocking and the words of the lines. In opera, it specifically means that the singer may choose not to sing at full volume, not pushing their voice to the utmost. All of their acting and vocal expression will be at full power, however, with all the passion and conviction that opera requires. You will be their first audience; they are ready and excited to give you the story and the music.

# Opera 101

Placido Domingo as Alfredo and Teresa Stratas as Violetta  
in Franco Zeffirelli's 1983 movie version of *La Traviata*.

## Step 1~ Know the story!

In opera, it is important to know as much as possible about what is going on beforehand, including the ending. By all means, read the synopsis and libretto; listen to a recording! Once the music, the voices, the setting, the lights, and the dramatic staging come together at the performance, audience members will be better able to fit all the elements seamlessly together into the plot. The plot then becomes the springboard for the real power of opera, the music.



## Step 2~Experience the music!

Composers use many tools to communicate with music. They create melodies that evoke a variety of emotions. They use tempos (how slow or fast) and dynamics (how loud or soft) and rhythms (the frequency and pattern of beat). They choose particular instruments to add color to the music they have written. Think of instrument choice as a type of painting for your ears! The term "soundscape" is often used in describing the music of an opera, and it can set the atmosphere and give information about character and plot. What is it telling you?

## Step 3 ~Understand the singers!

Opera singers are vocal athletes. They practice every day to exercise their vocal chords and their extensive breath control. The combinations of notes that they have to sing are very difficult, and the things that they can do with their voices are extreme. You can easily compare a regular singing voice and an opera singing voice to a weekend jogger and a gold-medal-winning Olympic track champion! BUT, the reason that their voices are prized is that they can express so much emotion on a grand scale.

## Step 4~Plunge in!

This is the most important step. Everything about opera is over-the-top, on the edge, enormous in every way. It's an art form that thrives on its intensity and passion. Opera stories portray people at their most extreme, and the singers and the music communicate in ways that words alone cannot. You have to let go, allow yourself to stop thinking and analyzing and simply FEEL THE EMOTION!

(with acknowledgements to *Opera 101* by Fred Plotkin for idea organization above)

# Short Explorations

## Go Back in Time

**V**ioletta Valéry is based on a character in *La Dame Aux Camélias* by Alexandre Dumas (son of the man who wrote *The Three Musketeers*) who is in turn based on a real woman that Dumas knew, Marie Duplessis. All three women lead salons, a French term, meaning a social gathering for the main purpose of stimulating conversation. To get an idea of the impact of these salons, read the excerpts below from the memoirs of two different men in the late 1700's, about Julie Lespinasse, another woman famous for her Paris salon.

*Her talent for casting out a thought and giving it for discussion to men of that class, her own talent in discussing it with precision, sometimes with eloquence, her talent for bringing forward new ideas and varying the topic-always with the facility and ease of a fairy, who, with one touch of her wand, can change the scene of her enchantment-these talents, I say, were not those of an ordinary woman.*

-from the memoir of Monsieur Marmontel

*Her circle met daily from five o'clock until nine in the evening. There we were sure to find choice men of all orders in the State, the Church, the Court,-military men, foreigners, and the most distinguished men of letters. .... Politics, religion, philosophy, anecdotes, news, nothing was excluded from the conversation, and, thanks to her care, the most trivial little narrative gained, as naturally as possible, the place and notice it deserved. News of all kinds was gathered there in its first freshness.*

-from the memoir of Baron de Grimm

with thanks to Fordham University's Internet Modern History Sourcebook.

## Breathe like Singers

**T**he power of opera singer's breath control is formidable. They must be able to sing very complicated musical passages, to sustain long notes, and to project their voices without microphones. They work all the time on their abdominal muscles, particularly the diaphragm muscle which runs along the bottom of the ribcage.

- ☞ Pay attention to your breathing. What part of your body is moving? Place your hands on your stomach just below your ribcage and try to push them out slightly as you breathe in.
- ☞ Keep your hands in place, take a breath in, and say "ha!" You should feel your diaphragm jump.
- ☞ Try to fill your lungs with the biggest breath you can, and let it out as slowly as you can with a hissing sound.
- ☞ Try it again and while you are hissing have a partner count how long you can make the hissing sound or (harder) how long you can make the sound "ahhh." If you were to practice this every day, you would build the muscle and be able to make sound for longer periods of time, as opera singers can.

Benjamin Franklin embraced salon society in Paris, and his popularity helped him secure funds from the French to aid the American Revolution. Segment of *Benjamin Franklin at the Court of France* by William Overend Geller



### ASK STUDENTS:

In the 18th and 19th centuries, people found out the news and exchanged ideas in person through books, letters, newspapers, and of course, in person. There was no TV, phones, internet- no texting, blogging, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, or Instagram.

With a partner, imagine life without 20th and 21st century technologies! Talk through one day and figure out how you would substitute 18th and 19th century methods every time you currently use a smart phone, computer, or TV. Plan your weekly "salon" with a group of people to discuss current and viral news.

- What group of people would you invite to your "salon", a weekly gathering to talk for up to four hours?
- How would you lead the conversation to keep it flowing and interesting?
- How would you include everyone and keep the discussions civil and stimulating?
- What makes a great conversation?

Every once in a while during the performance, try to pay attention to which passages seem to require the most breath control.

## On Operatic Voices

All classical singers fall into one of the categories listed below. A singer cannot choose his/her voice-type... it is something he/she is born with. Composers usually assign a voice type to a character based on his/her personality or age. Read these descriptions for specific examples.

### Women

**Soprano:** The highest female voice, with a range similar to a violin. In opera, the soprano most often plays the young girl or the heroine (sometimes called the Prima Donna), since a high bright voice traditionally suggests femininity, virtue and innocence. The normal range of a soprano is from middle C through two octaves above middle C, sometimes with extra top notes. Most women are sopranos. In *La Traviata*, Violetta Valéry is sung by a soprano.

**Mezzo-Soprano:** Also called a mezzo; the middle female voice similar to an oboe in range. A mezzo's sound is often darker and warmer than a soprano's. In opera, composers generally use a mezzo to portray older women, villainesses, seductive heroines, and sometimes even young boys. Mezzo-Sopranos also often serve as the friend or sidekick to the soprano. The mezzo-soprano's normal range is from the A below middle C to the A two octaves above it. In *La Traviata*, Flora Bervoix is sung by a mezzo-soprano.

**Contralto:** The lowest female voice, similar in range to a clarinet. Contraltos usually sing the roles of older females or special character parts such as witches and old gypsies. The range is two octaves from F below middle C to the top line of the treble clef. A true contralto is very rare – some believe they don't exist at all! There are no contraltos in *La Traviata*.

### Men

**Counter-tenor:** The highest male voice, which was mainly used in very early opera and oratorio (a genre of classical vocal music similar to opera but generally based on a religious topic and accompanied by a choir). The voice of a countertenor sounds very much like a mezzosoprano's voice and they often sing the same repertoire. Like the contralto, true countertenors are very rare. There is no counter-tenor in *La Traviata*.

**Tenor:** Usually the highest male voice in an opera. It is similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color, and acoustical ring. The tenor typically plays the hero or the love interest in an opera. His voice ranges from the C below middle C to the C above. The role of Alfredo Germont in *La Traviata* is sung by a tenor.

**Baritone:** The middle male voice, close to a French horn in range and tone color. The baritone usually plays villainous roles or father-figures. The range is from the G that is an octave and a half below middle C to G above. In *La Traviata*, the role of Giorgio Germont is sung by a baritone.

**Bass-Baritone:** This male voice sits in the upper part of the bass voice. It is associated with a very "Wagnerian" style. The voice must be able to sing in the baritone's high tessitura, as well as resonate in the low bass range. In the lower bass register, the bass-baritone's color is lighter, whereas they can still achieve trumpeting sound in the upper baritone register. This voice enjoys incredible flexibility in various roles. There are no bass-baritone roles in *La Traviata*.

**Bass:** The lowest male voice, it is similar to a trombone or bassoon in range and color. Low voices usually suggest age and wisdom in serious opera. The role of Dr. Grenvil in *La Traviata* is a bass role. The range spans from roughly the F above middle C down to the F an octave and a fourth below.





# LA TRAVIATA

**NASH  
VILLE  
OPERA  
18.19**



# LA TRAVIATA

Opera in three acts by Giuseppe Verdi  
Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave after Alexandre Dumas  *fils'*  play  *La Dame aux Camélias*   
Premiere March 6, 1853, Teatro la Fenice, Venice

**OCTOBER 4 + 6, 2018**

Andrew Jackson Hall, TPAC  
The Patricia and Rodes Hart Production

**Bridgestone Americas**  
— TRUST FUND —  


Directed by John Hoomes  
Conducted by Dean Williamson  
Featuring the Nashville Opera Orchestra

## CAST & CHARACTERS

Alfredo Germont, lover of Violetta	Won Whi Choi*
Giorgio Germont, his father	Michael Corvino
Gastone de Letorières	Jordan Holland
Baron Douphol, a rival of Alfredo	Jeffrey Williams † 2014
Marchese d'Obigny	Mark Whatley † 2001
Doctor Grenvil	Ben Troxler
Violetta Valery, a courtesan	Emily Birsan*
Flora Bervoix, her friend	Kaylee Nichols*
Annina, Violetta's confidante and maid	Claire Boling
Giuseppe	Christon Carney*
Messenger	Edward Vaughn Kellam-Clegg*

\* Nashville Opera debut

† Former Mary Ragland Emerging Artist

## TICKETS & INFORMATION

Contact Nashville Opera at 615.832.5242 or visit [nashvilleopera.org](http://nashvilleopera.org).

### *Study Guide Contributors*

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Cara Schneider, Creative Director



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SUE & EARL  
SWENSSON



# THE STORY

SETTING: Paris, c. 1850

## ACT I - The salon in Violetta's house

Violetta Valéry, a famed courtesan, throws a lavish party at her Paris home to celebrate her recovery from a recent illness. Gastone, a count, has brought his friend and young nobleman, Alfredo Germont. It is rumored that Alfredo is fascinated by Violetta and has been visiting and enquiring after her health daily. The crowd is touched by the sweet sentiment and asks Alfredo for a toast. Alfredo obliges, celebrating the joys of love. (*Libiamo ne' lieti calici*).

The guests move to the ballroom but Violetta withdraws, feeling faint. The infatuated Alfredo lingers and declares his love (*Un dì, felice, eterea*). She initially rejects him but is moved by his sincerity. Before Alfredo leaves, she gives him a camellia and tells him to return to her once the flower has wilted. They are to meet the next day.

After the party ends and Violetta is alone, she wonders if Alfredo could have awakened a desire within her to be truly loved. Dismissing the thought, she declares to live a life of freedom and pleasure above all else (*Sempre libera*).

## ACT II, SCENE 1 - Violetta's house outside Paris

Three months later, Alfredo and Violetta are deeply in love and living together in her country house outside Paris. She has completely abandoned her former life and Alfredo praises their contentment (*Lunge da lei...De' miei bollenti spiriti*). Annina, Violetta's maid, arrives from Paris where she confides in Alfredo that she has just sold some of Violetta's belongings to support their country lifestyle. Alfredo, shocked, leaves for Paris immediately to settle matters himself.

An invitation awaits Violetta for a Parisian party that evening hosted by her friend, Flora. As she reads the invitation, she is called upon by Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father. Germont demands that she break off the relationship saying the affair will ruin the reputation of his family and engagement of Alfredo's sister (*Pura siccome un angelo*). The devastated Violetta eventually agrees to end the romance knowing that she will break Alfredo's heart (*Ab! Dite alla giovine*). Witnessing her sacrifice, Germont is filled with gratitude and impressed by Violetta's nobility. He leaves her alone to weep.

Violetta accepts Flora's party invitation and writes a farewell letter to Alfredo. She tells him repeatedly of her unconditional love and is barely able to control her emotions. Before setting off for Paris, Violetta asks Annina to

deliver the farewell letter to Alfredo. Knowing Alfredo will be crushed by the news, Germont returns in an attempt to comfort his son. He reminds Alfredo of his sister and loving family in Provence (*Di Provenza il mar il suo*). Alfredo discovers the party invitation and suspects the Baron, Violetta's old lover, as the reason for their separation. He angrily decides to confront her at the party.

## ACT II, SCENE 2 - Party at Flora's house

Violetta enters the party with Baron Douphol making it evident to the others that her relationship with Alfredo has ended. She sees Alfredo at the gambling table and the Baron soon joins in the game. Alfredo, after winning several hands in a row, begins to leave with handfuls of money. Violetta fears that in a fit of anger, the Baron will challenge Alfredo to a duel and asks to speak with him in private. The jealous Alfredo demands that she admit to his face that she loves the Baron. Alfredo furiously calls the guests in to witness him publically denounce and humiliate Violetta. He throws his recent winnings at her feet, declaring it as payment for the affair (*Alfredo, di questo core*). Appalled by the scene, the guests and Giorgio denounce Alfredo's actions. He is immediately remorseful for his heartless behavior. Though scorned, Violetta stays, telling Alfredo of the deep love she still has for him. The scene ends as the Baron challenges Alfredo to a duel to avenge Violetta's public humiliation.

## ACT III - Violetta's bedroom, a few months later

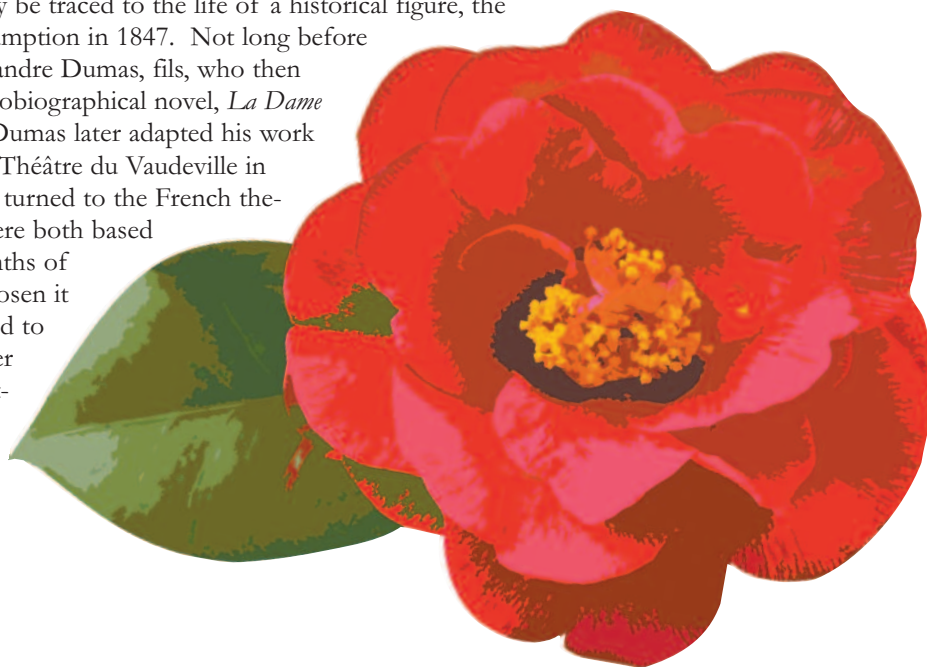
Doctor Grenvil confides in Annina, saying that Violetta's illness has worsened and she will soon die. When alone, Violetta reads a letter from Alfredo's father explaining that though the duel did take place, Alfredo was only wounded and has since learned the truth of her sacrifice. Alfredo seeks forgiveness and plans to return to her immediately. Violetta fears she will not live long enough to see him again (*Addio, del passato*). Just then, Annina rushes in with Alfredo. The lovers reunite and Alfredo urges Violetta to leave with him for Paris (*Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo*). Greatly weakened, she knows her life is fading. Giorgio enters with Dr. Grenvil, regretting his part in the separation of the two lovers. Suddenly, Violetta revives (*Ma se tornando...Ab! Gran Dio! Morir sì giovane*), but a moment later collapses and dies in Alfredo's arms (*Prendi, quest'è l'immagine de' miei passati giorni*).



Jennifer Black starred as Violetta in Nashville Opera's last production of LA TRAVIATA in 2011.

## THE REAL VIOLETTA: LA DAME AUX CAMELIAS BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS, FILS

The story of Verdi's *La Traviata* can ultimately be traced to the life of a historical figure, the courtesan Marie Duplessis, who died from consumption in 1847. Not long before her death, Duplessis had a brief affair with Alexandre Dumas, fils, who then transformed this personal history into a semi-autobiographical novel, *La Dame aux Camélias* (*The Lady of the Camellias*), in 1848. Dumas later adapted his work as a play, and this stage version premiered at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris on February 2, 1852. Giuseppe Verdi often turned to the French theater for inspiration—his *Ernani* and *Rigoletto* were both based on plays by Victor Hugo—and within a few months of the premiere of *La Dame aux Camélias*, he had chosen it as the subject of the new opera he was contracted to write for the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. Together with his librettist Francesco Maria Piave, he created one of his most realistic dramas, not shying away from the moral and medical tensions of his source material, calling it “a subject of the times.”





# RECOMMENDED RECORDINGS

## AUDIO

Label: EMI Classics (1980)  
 Conductor: Riccardo Muti  
 Performers: Renata Scottò, Alfredo Kraus, Renato Bruson

Label: EMI Classics (1955)  
 Conductor: Carlo Maria Giulini  
 Performers: Maria Callas, Giuseppe Di Stefano, Ettore Bastianini

Label: Decca (1963)  
 Conductor: Sir John Pritchard  
 Performers: Joan Sutherland, Carlo Bergonzi, Robert Merrill

## VIDEO

Salzburg Festival (2005) Deutsche Gramophone  
 Conductor: Carlo Rizzi  
 Performers: Anna Netrebko, Rolando Villazon, Thomas Hampson

Opus Arte, Royal Opera House  
 Conductor: Antonio Pappano  
 Performers: Renee Fleming, Joseph Calleja, Thomas Hampson

VAI, Rome Opera House  
 Director: Mario Lanfranchi  
 Performers: Anna Moffo, Gino Bechi, Franco Bonisoli

Grant Youngblood as Giorgio Germont and Jennifer Black as Violetta in Nashville Opera's 2011 *La Traviata*



Reed Hummel

## FUN FACTS

The movies *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and *Pretty Woman* (1990) both used the opera *La Traviata* as inspiration!

In 1852, Verdi attended the premiere of Alexandre Dumas' play *La Dame aux Camélias*.

The play was based on Dumas' own affair with the courtesan Marie Duplessis.

Just one year later, Verdi's operatic version of the story, *La Traviata*, premiered at the La Fenice opera house in Venice!

The famous American movie *Camille* (1936), starring Greta Garbo and Robert Taylor, is also an adaptation of Dumas' play.

Leading operatic soprano roles often end with a tragic death by consumption or tuberculosis.

Some of the most dramatic include:

Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata*

Mimi in Puccini's *La Bohème*

Antonia in Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann*.

This disease was thought of as quite romantic, leaving the sufferer thin and pale—attributes thought of as marks of beauty.

# ABOUT THE COMPOSER

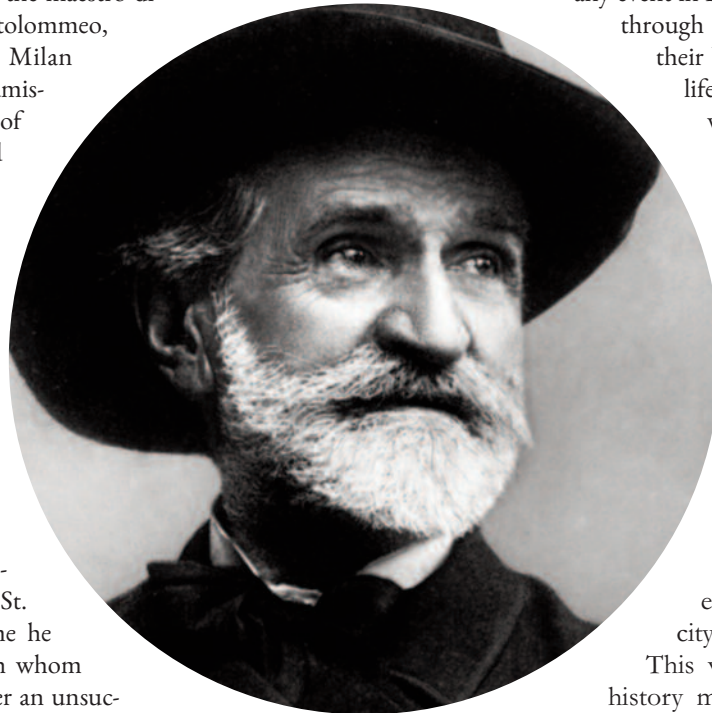
GIUSEPPE VERDI | 1813–1901

Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi was born into a family of small landowners and traders. His father, Carlo, was an innkeeper and his mother, Luigia Uttini, a spinner. Verdi's father believed whole-heartedly in music education, starting him at the age of four. By the time he was nine years old, he held a permanent position as organist at the church of St. Michele. Though Verdi moved to Busseto to study with the maestro di cappella at the church of St. Bartolommeo, he strived to study at the Milan Conservatory. He applied for admission and scholarship at the age of 18, but was ultimately rejected because of his "unorthodox" piano technique. This rejection affected Verdi for the rest of his life. He began to study with Vincenzo Lavigna at La Scala in Milan who trained him in strict counterpoint, encouraged him to attend the theatre regularly, and introduced him into the Milanese musical society.

Verdi eventually moved back to Busseto and was appointed the new maestro di musica at St. Bartolommeo. During this time he married Margherita Barezzi with whom he had two children. In 1837 after an unsuccessful attempt to stage his opera *Rocceca* at the Teatro Ducale in Parma, he revised the work and renamed it *Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio* which received its premiere nine months later at La Scala. After this success, he was commissioned to compose three more operas for La Scala. The first, *Un giorno di regno* was an unfortunate disaster and could have echoed his great personal loss—the death of his wife Margherita which followed the deaths of both children over the two previous years. His professional failure and personal loss caused him to cease composing music for nearly two years. The hiatus ended with the astounding success of his next opera, *Nabucco*. A remarkable trend was set in which Verdi produced 16 operas between the years of 1842 and 1853, averaging the completion of an opera every nine months. During these successful years, Verdi fell in love with soprano Guiseppina Strepponi who became his lifelong companion.

Verdi continued to compose operas forming a particular structure of composition choosing operatic subjects that fit the singers available to him. Between his middle to late years, he composed

famous works such as *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, *Aïda*, *Otello*, and *Falstaff*. As Verdi's health diminished, he composed his final piece, a setting of the religious text *Stabat Mater*. In 1901, while residing at the Grand Hotel et de Milan, Verdi suffered a stroke and died six days later on January 27, 1901. A month after his death, a large crowd, said to be one of the largest public assemblies of any event in Italian history, gathered to process through Milan and mourn the death of their beloved patriot composer. In his lifetime, Verdi composed 28 operatic works, 11 choral works, 22 songs/vocal trios, and six instrumental works.



## VIVA VERDI!

The Resurgence, or *Risorgimento*, was a period of time in 19th-century Italy that began with the ending of the Napoleonic rule and resulted in the unification of Italian city-states into one Italian state. This was a turbulent time in Italy's history marked by insurrection, revolution, and conflict. This was also a time when a sense of Italian pride began to emerge from citizens all over the Italian peninsula.

During this time of *Risorgimento*, Verdi established himself amidst his fellow countrymen as an advocate for statehood. After a performance of his opera *Nabucco*, audiences cheered for an encore of the "Va pensiero" chorus, the song of the Hebrew slaves. To the citizens of Italy, "Va pensiero" became a song of statehood and nationalism that made Verdi a fixture in the Italian resurgence. People would shout "Viva V.E.R.D.I.," a secret slogan based off of Verdi's name that meant "Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia." (Victor Emmanuel King of Italy)

One month after Verdi died, hundreds of thousands of mourning Italian citizens gathered to follow Verdi's remains to their final place of rest. As the procession progressed through Milan, the crowd sang the "Va pensiero" chorus. Verdi was seen as a hero to the Italian people.

# THE LIBRETTIST

## FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE

Francesco Maria Piave, born in Venice in 1810 during the brief Napoleonic Kingdom of Italy, was known as a jack-of-all-trades of the theatre. He was an excellent librettist, working with many successful composers of the day, a journalist and translator, as well as the resident poet and stage manager at La Fenice where he first met Verdi. Both men were known as ardent Italian patriots and together completed 10 operas; the two most famous were *La Traviata* and *Rigoletto*.

It was said that Verdi tended to bully Piave in their working relationship “enslaving the librettist, who becomes scarcely more than an instrument in his hands...Piave’s libretti are in fact those best suited to Verdi’s music simply because, in detail as well as in general shape, Verdi himself composed them.” This impression comes from Verdi’s style of composition for which he is well known. The composer structured scenes around the arrangement of musical pieces which then laid the ground-

work for the text. In other words, Verdi valued his own musical structure over the text of the piece. This controlled the dramatic arc and could perhaps take away some of the creativity of Piave. However, the two seemed to have a sincere friendship and Piave was known as someone Verdi loved. In 1859, Piave worked as the stage manager of La Scala in Milan. Though he found success in different vocations, he is most known for his work with Verdi.



Soprano Emily Bisan will make her debut as Violetta in Nashville Opera's upcoming *La Traviata*.

## OTHER NOTABLE WORKS BY VERDI

*Nabucco* (1842)

*Ernani* (1844)

*Macbeth* (1847)

*Luisa Miller* (1849)

*Rigoletto* (1851)

*Il Trovatore* (1853)

*La Traviata* (1853)

*Simon Boccanegra* (1857)

*Un Ballo in Maschera* (1859)

*La Forza del Destino* (1862)

*Don Carlos* (1867)

*Aïda* (1871)

*Otello* (1887)

*Falstaff* (1893)



# OPERA ETIQUETTE

## ALWAYS BE EARLY!

Please arrive early to ensure you are able to find your seat before the performance begins and before the orchestra tunes. If you are late, you may miss the overture or even the first act!

## OPERA IS FOR ALL AGES TO ENJOY!

Opera is full of emotion, passion, human conflict, and discovery. Nashville Opera usually presents operas in their original language and projects supertitles above the stage so the audience can understand every word.

## WHAT TO WEAR

Many people think of a night at the opera as a glamorous event and an excuse to bring out the fancy attire. But, it is also acceptable to dress comfortably. For dress rehearsals, the casual attire that students wear to school is perfectly acceptable. A light sweater, jacket, or wrap is suggested because the theater is air-conditioned.

## USE THE RESTROOM

Once in the theater it is courteous to remain seated and involved in the production until intermission. Please do not leave the theater unless there is an emergency.

## PLEASE BE COURTEOUS...

to everyone in the audience and on stage. Opera is a live performance, so any talking, cell-phone use (including texting) or other noise/light disruption takes away from everyone's experience at the opera. Remember that unlike many staged performances, opera singers do not use microphones. This makes it essential to wait until intermission to unwrap gum/candy, talk to your neighbor or use electronic devices that may distract others. Be sure to turn off cell phone and pagers.

## APPLAUSE WELCOME!

There are several times during a performance when it is appropriate to applaud the performers. The first opportunity to applaud takes place when the conductor takes the podium at the very beginning of the performance and when he/she returns to the podium following intermission(s). It is also acceptable to applaud after an overture or aria in the middle of a performance. Applaud when the performance moves you. You may show your appreciation to the performers by shouting "Bravo!" for a male performer, "Brava!" for a female performer, or "Bravi!" for an ensemble. At the conclusion of the performance, singers who performed principal roles in the opera will take their "curtain call." It is appropriate to continue applauding until all singers have stepped forward to accept their applause. Sometimes, audience members are so impressed with the overall performance of the opera, they will stand and applaud the entire ensemble. This is called a "standing ovation."

## NO PHOTOS OR RECORDINGS PERMITTED



# A SOUND ANATOMY OF OPERA

There are many different kinds of songs in opera. Performers may sing alone, in couples (duets), trios, or larger groups, and there are also moments when no one sings at all—and each composer develops his or her own preferred combinations of these options.

## THE OVERTURE

An opera usually begins with an orchestral piece of music called the overture, which functions as an introduction to the opera. Lasting anywhere from five to twenty-five minutes, these opera overtures usually contain important themes from the rest of the production. Before 1800, house lights were not dimmed while the overture played, and audience members continued to talk, drink, and even play cards! This ceased in the 1900's as the overture became a more integral part of an operatic performance. At the end of the overture, the curtain rises and the story of the opera unfolds through a series of scenes. These scenes are organized into acts.

## ARIAS

An aria is a solo moment for an opera singer and is usually accompanied by the orchestra. Italian for “air” or song, an aria stops the plot momentarily, giving each character the opportunity to express their innermost thoughts and feelings. These pieces also provide an opportunity for the singer to demonstrate their vocal and artistic skill. Mozart, Verdi and Puccini were able to achieve a remarkable balance between memorable melodies that perfectly suit the human voice while still reflecting the drama of the text.

## RECITATIVES

Recitatives, a type of singing unique to opera, help propel the action forward. They can be accompanied either by a full orchestra, or, as is often the case with opera written before 1800, by harpsichord or keyboard instrument. Often introducing an aria, the text is delivered quickly and encompasses a very limited melodic range. It has no recognizable melody and the rhythms follow those of the spoken word.

## ENSEMBLE (“TOGETHER”)

Ensemble singing deals with two or more voices of different range performing together. These include duets, trios, quartets, quintets, and sometimes sextets. The composer blends the voices depending on the dramatic requirements of the plot. For instance, a love duet may begin with each performer singing different music at different times, then gradually unifying into harmony. Conversely, the music of a duet may depict conflict. Georges Bizet used this technique in *Carmen*: if you listen to the duets sung by Carmen and Don José, you might notice that their musical lines are never completely blended, and this foreshadows their tragic ends.

## CHORUS

Most operas include music sung by a large group of singers (sometimes more than 40) called a chorus. The chorus often appears in a crowd scene and can provide a stunning contrast to solo or ensemble singing. In one opera by Benjamin Britten, the chorus is played by a single male and a single female, as in the tradition of ancient Greek theatre.

## ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

The orchestra accompanies the singing and introduces the opera with the overture. Musical and emotional themes often appear in orchestral introductions and conclusions to arias, recitatives, and choruses. In many cases, the orchestra plays such an important role, the gravity of its existence is that of a leading character.

# Special Thanks

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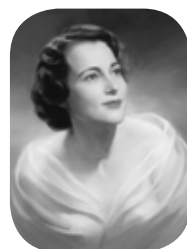
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