

Rigoletto

GIUSEPPE VERDI

1851

SUNG IN ITALIAN

- APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME: 120 minutes

"La donna è mobile", "Caro nome"...these are only few of the successful arias contained in this Verdi's Opera where the identity of the Villain is blurred and whose audience will most certainly cries a river.

When the Italian composer decided to adapt Victor Hugo's "Le Roi s'amuse", the play, which harshly and straightforwardly criticises the Royal family, had been already censored. As a consequence, this passionate opera went through many ups and downs before making it to the Venice's Fenice Theatre, where it premiered on the 11 March 1851. Verdi and librettist Francesco Maria Piave had to change a number of different elements such as the setting, titles and names in order to be allowed to stage it.



MAIN CHARACTERS

The Duke of Mantua, the Duke (tenor)

Rigoletto, his jester (baritono)

Gilda, Rigoletto's daughter (soprano)

Sparafucile, hit man (basso)

Maddalena, Sparafucile's sister (contralto)

THE PLOT

Rigoletto is set in 16th century Mantua, where the hedonist and libertine Duke seduces Gilda, a young lady that turns out to be the daughter of the Duke's jester Rigoletto. Determined to protect his daughter and to kill the Duke, Rigoletto will end up murdering the poor girl dressed up as the Duke.

Act 1

The Duke is bragging about his unfaithfulness and promiscuousness while Jester Rigoletto mocks all betrayed husbands, making everyone around ballistic. Back home, he lectures his daughter about men's infidelity and advises her to be careful. Despite all this, Gilda is soon joined by a course mate of hers, who is actually the unstoppable Duke in disguise. She falls in love with him and sings her love as soon as he leaves. Willing to get back at the Jester, a group of courtesans gather up and kidnap Gilda, mistaking her for the jester's mistress instead of daughter.

Act 2

The Duke hears some courtesans talking boastfully about the kidnapping and after realising Gilda was the victim, he runs away to set her free. Rigoletto enters and after setting his daughter free he oaths to vengeance her honour.

Act 3

Rigoletto hires hit man Sparafucile to murder the Duke. He tricks the Duke into a hostel where Rigoletto and his daughter get to, as well. The jester wants his daughter to realise what vile a cheat the Duke can get to be and, in fact, he is soon joined by Maddalena, putting poor Gilda in despair. Maddalena, who is Sparafucile's sister, is supposed to be there to frame the Duke, however, she is deeply in love with him and therefore begs her brother to spare his life for her. Sparafucile decides to please his sister. And resolves he would spare the duke's life if he can find someone else to kill so to wrap up the body and give it to Rigoletto, passing it off as the Duke's. Heartbroken Gilda overhears the hit man and decides she would sacrifice herself in order to save her love. At the end of the act, doubtful Rigoletto opens up the sack to verify the identity of the corpse and sees his daughter's.

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reservation@music-opera.com

+33(0)1 53 59 39 29

16 rue Bleue – 75009 PARIS - France