

Baltimore Concert Opera presents: Verdi's *Rigoletto*



The Gist of the Story:

Setting: the city of Mantua, in the 16th century, after the Victor Hugo play *Le roi s'amuse* ("The King amuses himself")

This heartbreaking tragedy centers around the licentious Duke of Mantua, his hunch-backed court jester Rigoletto, and Rigoletto's beautiful young daughter Gilda. Rigoletto struggles to hide the innocent Gilda from the Duke and his courtiers who are constantly in search of their next conquests. The opera's original title (before being struck by the Austrian censors) was *La maledizione* (The Curse). The opera opens with an old nobleman cursing the Duke and Rigoletto after the Duke seduces his daughter and Rigoletto mocks the elderly courtier's pained protestations. The curse comes to fruition when Gilda subsequently falls in love with the Duke and eventually sacrifices her life to save him from the assassins hired by her own father.

Who was Giuseppe Verdi?

excerpts from Sir Denis Forman's *A Night at the Opera: an irreverent guide to the plots, the singers, the composers, the recordings.*

HIS HABITAT: His farm at Busseto, Milan, Genoa, Paris, but much of his life spent travelling between opera houses mainly in Italy but also including Moscow, London and Madrid.
COMMENTS ON THE COMPOSER: Verdi was one of the few composers who had a long, successful, mainly happy life. He started as a talented musical peasant and finished up as the great maestro, the polymath and sage of Italian opera. Also, a national hero. Along with Mozart and Wagner he is one of opera's three greats, and today he still has twice as many operas in the repertory as either of them.

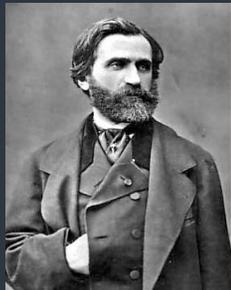
On Verdi's creative process: 'Once the storyline was in, Verdi would work with his librettist in parceling out the scenes and acts into arias, duets, ensembles, etc. He would then move on to sketch out the music for the opera. This he did on two staves. After a lot of hard work he would transfer these on to a skeleton score with only the most important instruments marked in, pack his bags, go to the city where the opera was to be produced and listen to the singers. Next he would adjust the score and complete the orchestration in a helter-skelter rush for the first orchestral rehearsal. He would then rule over the processes of production with a will of iron until the curtain.'

A Word about the Words: Verdi selected the works himself, but relied on a librettist to adapt the story to dramatic form. He maintained a close relationship with Francesco Maria Piave who prepared 10 libretti (operatic texts, literally *little books*) for him. Piave was a stage manager, translator, and poet at La Scala for many years, known as a jack-of-all-trades. His calm and tactful demeanor was a good fit for the passionate, opinionated Verdi. Although Verdi very much dominated the working relationship, their friendship lasted many years, with Verdi supporting his family after Piave suffered a stroke in his fifties.

WHO?

Composer:

Giuseppe Verdi



(1813-1901)

(born the same year as Wagner!)

Librettist:

Francesco Maria Piave



(1810-1876)

WHAT?

A tragic opera in 3 Acts

WHEN?

Premiered March 11, 1851

WHERE?

First performance at
Teatro La Fenice in Venice,
Italy

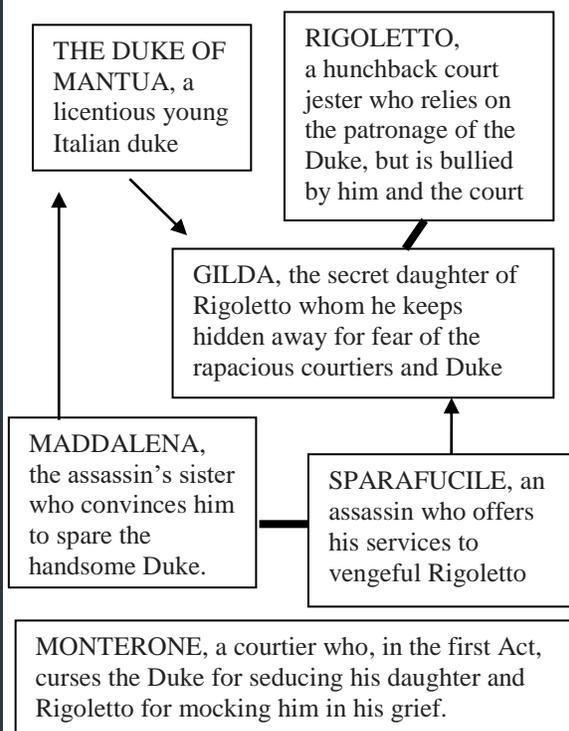
Baltimore Concert Opera

11 W. Mount Vernon Pl.

Baltimore, MD, 21201

baltimoreconcertopera.com

The Characters



Read more about *Rigoletto*

Baldini, Gabriele. (trans. Roger Parker, 1980). *The Story of Giuseppe Verdi: Oberto to Un Ballo in Maschera*. Cambridge, et al: Cambridge University Press. 1970.

Kimbell, David R.B.. *Verdi in the Age of Italian Romanticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

Walker, Frank. *The Man Verdi*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1982.