

RIGOLETTO

Rigoletto is an opera in three acts by Giuseppe Verdi.

Francesco Maria Piave's libretto is based on the 1832 play *Le roi s'amuse* by Victor Hugo.

Rigoletto premiered on March 11, 1851 at Teatro La Fenice in Venice.

The action takes place in Mantua, Italy, in the 16th century.

ACT I - Interior of the Ducal Palace

ORCHESTRAL PRELUDE & INTRODUCTION

SCENE

Della mia bella incognita

The Duke of Mantua, Borsa (a courtier)

The Duke is ready to have his way with a young woman he's been visiting, incognito, every Sunday for three months. But for right now, the Countess Ceprano will do.

BALLATA

Questa o quella per me pari sono

Duke

The Duke is a proponent of free love.

MINUETTO & SCENE

Partite? Crudele!

Duke, Countess Ceprano, Rigoletto (court jester),

Chorus of Male Courtiers, Borsa

The Duke details his ardor to the Countess Ceprano, who reminds him of her duty to her husband. All the men except the Count Ceprano think this is amusing.

PERIGORDINO

SCENE & CHORUS

Gran nuova! . . . Tutto e festa, tutto e gioia

Marullo (a courtier), Courtiers, Duke, Rigoletto,

Count Ceprano, Borsa

Marullo announces that Rigoletto is keeping a mistress. The Duke is untouchable, but warns Rigoletto, as the facilitator of his affairs, to be careful. Ceprano incites the others - they will play a prank on Rigoletto to get him back for all the hurt and humiliation he's caused them.

SCENE & CHORUS

Ch'io gli parli . . . Oh tu che la festa audace ah! turbot

Count Monterone, all the men in the previous scene

Count Monterone enters and challenges the whole court in defense of his daughter's honor.

(The Duke recently had an affair with Count Monterone's daughter.)

Before Count Monterone is imprisoned for his appearance and words he curses the Duke for his actions and Rigoletto for his mockery. Rigoletto takes the curse to heart.

ACT II - Rigoletto's house and the street outside

RECITATIVE & DUET *(Quel vecchio maledivami!)*
Rigoletto, Sparafucile (a professional assassin)

Sparafucile offers Rigoletto his professional services.

RECITATIVE & DUET *Pari siamo . . . Deh non parlare al misero*
Rigoletto, Gilda (Rigoletto's daughter),
Giovanna (Gilda's nurse), Duke

Rigoletto bemoans his fate. As a deformed man, as a hunchback, people are cruel to him. Rigoletto loathes his job, but he enjoys hurting people before they have the chance to hurt him. Gilda comes to meet Rigoletto. With Gilda, Rigoletto can let his guard down. Gilda worries about her father and his sorrows. He will not tell her his name, what he does outside the house, or anything about his past apart from the joy Gilda's mother brought him. Rigoletto wants to be sure that Gilda doesn't go anywhere but church. Giovanna tells him that the doors are always locked and that Gilda is safe but the Duke lurks in the shadows. Rigoletto leaves again.

RECITATIVE & DUET *Giovanna, ho dei rimorsi . . . Signor ne principe io lo vorrei*
Gilda, Giovanna, Duke, Ceprano, Borsa

Gilda tells Giovanna that she has feelings for a man, a stranger. Giovanna and the Duke are in cahoots - Giovanna admits the Duke and disappears, leaving Gilda and the Duke to sing a most tender love duet, during which the Duke tells Gilda that his name is Gualtier Malde and that he is a student. Meanwhile, Ceprano and Borsa appear and confirm that this is Rigoletto's house.

RECITATIVE & ARIA *Gualtier Malde!... Caro nome*
Gilda, Borsa, Marullo, Ceprano, Courtiers

Gilda sings of her love.
The Duke's courtiers appear and identify the woman they believe to be Rigoletto's mistresses.

RECITATIVE & CHORUS *(Rideo! . . . perche?) . . . Zitti, zitti moviamo a vendetta*
Rigoletto, Borsa, Ceprano, Marullo, Courtiers, Gilda

Rigoletto returns and runs into the courtiers. Thinking they are tricking Ceprano, he helps them. Too late he discovers that they have absconded with Gilda and not Countess Ceprano. Rigoletto faults Monterone's curse.

ACT III - Interior of the Ducal Palace

RECITATIVE & ARIA *Ella mi fu rapita! . . . Parmi mi veder le lagrime*
Duke

Someone stole the Duke's love right out from under his nose. He sings of his love for Gilda.

CHORUS *Duca, duca! . . . Scorrendo uniti remota via*
Courtiers, Duke

The courtiers fill the Duke in on the kidnapping. Gilda is in the palace.

ARIA *Possente amor mi chiama*
Duke, Courtiers

The Duke sings once again of his love - he's thrilled that Gilda has ended up under his roof.

He sings "*conosco alfin chi sono*" - "at last I know who I am."

The courtiers are surprised by the Duke's disposition.

(Is there any chance that Gilda is really the one and could reform him?!?)

SCENE & ARIA *Povero Rigoletto! . . . Cortigiani, vil razza dannata*
Courtiers, Rigoletto, Page

Rigoletto pretends indifference while looking for Gilda. The Courtiers enjoy torturing him.

A page enters with a request from the Duchess. (There's a Duchess?!?)

It comes out that that the Duke is with Gilda.

Rigoletto can restrain himself no longer, he tells the Courtiers that Gilda is his daughter, not his mistress. He rages against the Courtiers but when they won't let him through to Gilda (and the Duke), Rigoletto pleads with them.

RECITATIVE & CHORUS *Mio padre! . . . (Coi fanciulli e co' dementi)*
Gilda, Rigoletto, Courtiers

Gilda appears, the Courtiers withdraw.

DUET *Parla, siam soli. . . . Tutte le feste al tempio*
Rigoletto, Gilda, Herald, Monterone

Gilda explains how she was won over by the Duke.

Guards pass by with Monterone. Rigoletto takes up Monterone's cause of revenge.

DUET *Si, vendetta, tremenda vendetta*
Rigoletto, Gilda

Rigoletto is overwhelmed by the desire for revenge on the Duke.

Gilda asks her father for forgiveness, for her and for the Duke.

If he forgives them, so will heaven.

ACT IV - Interior of Sparafucile and Maddalena's house, the street outside

RECITATIVE & CANZONE *E l'ami . . . La donna e mobile*
 Rigoletto, Gilda, Duke

Gilda still loves the Duke. Rigoletto has brought her here to show her that the Duke is a cad. Rigoletto knows that the Duke will be here because he has arranged for Sparafucile to kill him. As he waits for Maddalena, the Duke sings about how fickle and changeable women are. (Maddalena, Sparafucile's sister, is the bait in the operation - she draws Sparafucile's targets to the house, has her way with them if she feels like it, then Sparafucile eliminates them.)

QUARTET *Un di, si bel rammentami*
 Duke & Maddalena (inside the house)
 Rigoletto & Gilda (outside the house)

The Duke sings of his love for Maddalena, Maddalena teases him in return. Gilda is horrified.

RECITATIVE *M'odi! Ritorna a casa*
 Rigoletto, Gilda, Sparafucile, Duke, Maddalena,
 male chorus offstage

Rigoletto instructs Gilda to go home, dress as a man and meet him in Verona. Once the deed is done (midnight), Rigoletto will return to dispose of the body himself.

RECITATIVE, TRIO & STORM *Ah piu non ragiono . . . Somiglia un Apollo*
 Gilda, Maddalena, Sparafucile, male chorus

Gilda returns. Maddalena asks her brother to spare the Duke. Sparafucile promises that if anyone arrives before midnight, he will kill that person in place of the Duke. Gilda knocks and is welcomed. Sparafucile kills her instead of the Duke.

RECITATIVE *Della vendetta alfin giunge l'istante!*
 Rigoletto, Sparafucile, Duke

Rigoletto receives a body in a sack. Then he hears the Duke singing.....

RECITATIVE & FINAL DUET *Chi e mai, chi e qui in sua vece?*
 Rigoletto, Gilda

Rigoletto discovers that the body in the bag is Gilda's. As she dies, Gilda begs her father for forgiveness.