

LA TRAVIATA BY VERDI – AT A GLANCE

OPERA BACKGROUND

- The opera *La traviata* (The Fallen Woman) was based on a play *La Dame aux caméllias* (The Lady of the Camellias), which was adapted by the French writer Dumas from his novel by the same name
- Because the contemporary storyline was about tragic romance and the divides of class in society – not mythology or ancient history, Verdi’s opera shocked audiences and made for a risky premiere.
- The first performance of *La traviata* (Venice, March 6, 1853) was a complete failure, due to many issues, including government censored costuming and the hoarse singing from the tenor (Alfredo). A year later (May 6, 1854) Verdi made a few revisions and revived the production in a different theater with much success.
- The Prelude to this opera is unusual in that it presents themes that depict important happenings in Violetta’s life, but in reverse order (the “Dying theme” followed by the “Love” theme).

MAIN CHARACTERS

- Violetta (vee – oh – LET – tah) Valéry – a well-known courtesan suffering from consumption
- Alfredo (all – FRAY – doh) Germont – an idealistic young man who falls in love with Violetta
- Giorgio (JOR – jee – oh) Germont – Alfredo’s father, who does not want his son to be with Violetta

WHAT HAPPENS?

- *La traviata* begins with a big party in the home of Violetta. Alfredo comes to the party and expresses to Violetta that he has adored her from afar for a long time.
- Violetta is confused by Alfredo’s pure devotion, having believed that she could never feel true love, because of her occupation. She decides, however to leave high society and move out to the suburbs of Paris to live with him.
- Giorgio, Alfredo’s father, makes an unexpected visit, pressuring Violetta to break up with his son so as not to shame Alfredo and his family. She leaves, and Alfredo gets angry with her, not knowing that his father encouraged her decision.
- Violetta jumps back into the Paris party scene, where Alfredo pursues her and makes accusations about her in front of the other guests.
- A few months later, Violetta is close to death in her bed. Alfredo rushes to her bedside, after his father shares the true account of her earlier choices. Alfredo asks for her forgiveness, as Violetta breathes her last breath in his arms, remembering the time they spent together.

YOU’LL WANT TO SEE THIS SHOW IF...

- You are new to opera – this opera is one of the most beloved in the entire world!
- You love a good cry - bring your Kleenex!™
- You like the movie *Pretty Woman* – which is based on a similar story.
- You want to hear and see a beautifully dressed chorus singing some of Verdi’s greatest music.