

OVERTURE OPERA GUIDES

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We are delighted to have the opportunity to work with Overture Publishing on this series of opera guides and to build on the work English National Opera did over twenty years ago with the Calder Opera Guide Series. As well as reworking and updating existing titles, Overture and ENO have commissioned new titles for the series and all of the guides will be published to coincide with the repertory being staged by the company.

We hope that these guides will prove an invaluable resource now and for years to come, and that by delving deeper into the history of an opera, the libretto and the nuances of the score, readers' understanding and appreciation of the opera and the art form in general will be enhanced.

Daniel Kramer
Artistic Director, ENO

The publisher John Calder began the Opera Guides series under the editorship of the late Nicholas John in association with English National Opera in 1980. It ran until 1994 and eventually included forty-eight titles, covering fifty-eight operas. The books in the series were intended to be companions to the works that make up the core of the operatic repertory. They contained articles, illustrations, musical examples and a complete libretto and singing translation of each opera in the series, as well as bibliographies and discographies.

The aim of the present relaunched series is to make available again the guides already published in a redesigned format with new illustrations, revised and newly commissioned articles, updated reference sections and a literal translation of the libretto that will enable the reader to get closer to the meaning of the original. New guides of operas not already covered will be published alongside the redesigned ones from the old series.

Gary Kahn
Series Editor

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for their assistance in the 2018 reprint of this volume

La traviata

Giuseppe Verdi

Overture Opera Guides

Series Editor

Gary Kahn

Editorial Consultant

Philip Reed



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Thematic Guide

Themes from the opera have been identified by the numbers in square brackets in the articles. These are printed at corresponding points in the libretto, so that the words can be related to the musical themes.

The critical edition of *La traviata*, edited by Fabrizio Della Seta and published by Ricordi/University of Chicago Press, appeared in 1996. For the first time it offers performers and scholars an edition of the opera based on Verdi's autograph score; it also supplies (as appendix material) the version of the opera that was performed at the La Fenice premiere, before Verdi revised the score after its hostile reception there. The music examples printed here are all in accordance with this critical edition.

[1] Adagio

ppp

[2] Allegro brillantissimo e molto vivace

p

[3] Brindisi / ALFREDO

Allegretto con grazia leggerissimo

p Li - bia - mo, li - bia - mo ne' lie - ti ca - li - ci

[4] Allegro brillante

p

La traviata

Opera in three acts
by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave
after the play *La Dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas *fils*

English translation by Andrew Huth

La traviata was first performed at the Teatro La Fenice, Venice, on 6th March 1853. It was first performed in Britain at Her Majesty's Theatre, London, on 24th May 1856. The first performance in the United States was at the Academy of Music, New York, on 3rd December 1856.

THE CHARACTERS

Violetta Valéry	<i>a courtesan</i>	soprano
Flora Bervoix	<i>her friend</i>	mezzo-soprano
Baron Douphol	<i>Violetta's protector</i>	baritone
Marquis D'Obigny	<i>friend of Flora</i>	bass
Doctor Grenvil		bass
Gaston, Vicomte de Létorières		tenor
Alfredo Germont		tenor
Annina	<i>Violetta's maid</i>	soprano
Giuseppe	<i>Violetta's servant</i>	tenor
Giorgio Germont	<i>Alfredo's father</i>	baritone
Servant to Flora		bass
Messenger		bass

Ladies and gentlemen, friends of Violetta and Flora, matadors, picadors, gypsies, servants of Violetta and Flora, masquers, dancers

Paris and its environs

ACT ONE

Prelude

[1, 16]

Scene 1

Paris, around the year 1850. A drawing room in Violetta's house. At the back is a door leading to another room; there are two further doors at either side; on the left a fireplace with a mirror above it. In the centre of the room, a richly laid table.

(Violetta, seated on a divan, is talking with the Doctor and some friends, while other guests go to meet a group of new arrivals, among whom are the Baron and Flora, who is escorted by the Marquis.)[2]

GUESTS I

The invitation was for earlier,
you've arrived late.

GUESTS II

We were playing cards at Flora's,
the time flew past as we gambled.

VIOLETTA (*going to meet them*)

Flora, my friends, you will make the remainder
of the night glitter with new pleasure,
our party will be more lively when we drink together.

FLORA, MARQUIS

Do you feel strong enough to enjoy yourself?

Note on the Contributors

Denis Arnold was Professor of Music at the University of Nottingham and Heather Professor of Music at Oxford University. He was editor of *The New Oxford Companion to Music* (Oxford University Press, 1983). He also broadcast frequently and wrote regularly for Gramophone. He died in 1986.

Andrew Huth writes extensively on music, with a particular enthusiasm for composers from Russia and Eastern Europe. He has translated and surtitled operas from many languages for, among others, Decca Records and the Royal Opera House.

Nicholas John joined ENO as publications manager in 1976 and was the company's dramaturge from 1985 until his death in 1996. He was series editor of the original John Calder opera guides and editor of *Violetta and Her Sisters* (Faber and Faber, 1983) and *Power House: The English National Opera Experience* (Lime Tree, 1992).

Roger Parker is Thurston Dart Professor of Music at King's College London. He is General Editor (with Gabriele Dotto) of the Donizetti critical edition. His most recent book is *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years*, written jointly with Carolyn Abbate.

Anna Picard trained as a singer at the Royal Academy of Music before working in the field of Early Music. From 2000 to 2013, she was Classical Music Critic for the *Independent on Sunday*. She also contributes to *Opera* and *BBC Music Magazine*.

Hugo Shirley is a musicologist and critic based in Germany. He was editor of *30-Second Opera* (Ivy Press, 2015) and is a regular contributor to *Gramophone* and *Opera*. He writes widely on opera and classical music and has published in the *Cambridge Opera Journal* and the *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank John Allison of *Opera*, John Pennino of the Metropolitan Opera, Charles Johnston and Mike Ashman for their assistance and advice in the preparation of this guide.

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