

OVERTURE OPERA GUIDES

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It is a pleasure to be able to welcome this Overture Opera Guide to Verdi's *Rigoletto*, the seventeenth to be published since the series was revived in 2010.

Verdi's middle-period masterpiece based on Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse* has attracted all manner of interpretations since its premiere in 1851, but few so triumphant as Jonathan Miller's version, created for ENO in 1982. Miller's transposing of the action from the intrigues of a sixteenth-century Italian Renaissance court to the Mafia-controlled world of New York's 'Little Italy' in the 1950s was a masterstroke to which ENO audiences have responded for thirty-five years now. This guide's appearance signals the most recent of over a dozen revivals of the production.

I hope that by delving deeper into *Rigoletto*'s background and exploring the many aspects of its score and libretto, readers' appreciation and understanding of this marvellous opera will be enhanced.

Daniel Kramer
Artistic Director, ENO
February 2017

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 repertoire. 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 intentions and meaning of the original. New guides of operas not already covered will be published alongside the redesigned ones from the old series.

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Series Editor

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OVERTURE OPERA GUIDES
in association with



Overture Publishing
an imprint of

ALMA BOOKS LTD
3 Castle Yard
Richmond
Surrey TW10 6TF
United Kingdom

Articles by Jonathan Keates and Roger Parker, revised and expanded, and by George Hall first published in this volume © the authors, 2017

This *Rigoletto* Opera Guide first published by Overture Publishing, an imprint of Alma Books Ltd, 2017

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Translation of libretto © The Estate of William Weaver

Printed in United Kingdom by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

ISBN: 978-1-84749-626-3

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Thematic Guide

Themes from the opera have been identified by the numbers in square brackets in the article on the music, pp. 21–32. These numbers are also printed at corresponding points in the libretto, so that the words can be related to the musical themes.

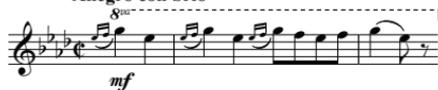
[1] *Introduction*

Allegro con brio



[2]

Allegro con brio



[2a]



[3]

Allegro con brio



Rigoletto

Melodramma in three acts

by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave

after Victor Hugo's play *Le Roi s'amuse*

English translation by William Weaver

Rigoletto was first performed at the Teatro La Fenice, Venice, on 11th March 1851. It was first performed in Britain at the Royal Italian Opera House, Covent Garden, London, on 14th May 1853. The first performance in the United States was at the Academy of Music, New York, on 19th February 1855.

THE CHARACTERS

The Duke of Mantua	tenor
Rigoletto <i>his court jester</i>	baritone
Gilda <i>Rigoletto's daughter</i>	soprano
Sparafucile <i>a hired assassin</i>	bass
Maddalena <i>Sparafucile's sister</i>	contralto
Giovanna <i>Gilda's duenna</i>	soprano
Count Monterone	baritone
Marullo <i>a nobleman</i>	baritone
Borsa <i>a courtier</i>	tenor
Count Ceprano	bass
Countess Ceprano	mezzo-soprano
Usher	bass
Page	mezzo-soprano

Noblemen, ladies, pages, halberdiers, servants

In and around Mantua during the sixteenth century

No. 1

Preludio

[8]

ATTO PRIMO

No. 2

Introduzione

[1, 2, 3, 4]

Sala magnifica nel palazzo ducale con porte nel fondo che mettono ad altre sale, pure splendidamente illuminate; folla di cavalieri e dame in gran costume nel fondo delle sale; paggi che vanno e vengono. La festa è nel suo pieno. Musica interna da lontano e scrosci di risa di tratto in tratto.

Scena I

(Il Duca e Borsa vengono da una porta del fondo.)

DUCA

Della mia bella incognita borghese
toccare il fin dell'avventura io voglio.

BORSA

Di quella giovin che vedete al tempio?

DUCA

Da tre mesi ogni festa.

BORSA

La sua dimora?

DUCA

In un remoto calle;
misterioso un uom v'entra ogni notte.

BORSA

E sa colei chi sia
l'amante suo?

No. 1

Prelude

[8]

ACT ONE

No. 2

Introduction

[1, 2, 3, 4]

A magnificent room in the ducal palace. Doors at the back open into other halls, also splendidly illuminated. An elegantly dressed crowd of courtiers and ladies moves through the inner rooms; pages come and go. The festivities are at their peak. Music from within, and occasional bursts of laughter.

Scene 1

(The Duke and Borsa come through a door at the back.)

DUKE

I want to complete my flirtation
with my lovely, unknown commoner.

BORSA

The young girl you see in church?

DUKE

Every holy day, for the last three months.

BORSA

Where is her house?

DUKE

In a remote little street;
a mysterious man enters there every night.

BORSA

Does she know
who her admirer is?

Note on the Contributors

George Hall writes widely about classical music in general and opera in particular for various publications, including the *Guardian*, *Opera*, *Opera News*, *BBC Music Magazine* and *The Stage*. He has also contributed to the *Oxford Companion to Music* and the *Penguin Opera Guide*.

Jonathan Keates is an author and critic. He has published biographies of Handel, Purcell and Stendhal, as well as fiction, travel and historical books, including *The Siege of Venice* (Chatto & Windus, 2005), a study of the Venetian revolution of 1848. He is currently writing a biography of Donizetti.

Roger Parker is Professor of Music at King's College London. He is General Editor (with Gabriele Dotto) of the Donizetti critical edition, published by Ricordi. His most recent book is *A History of Opera: The Last Four Hundred Years* (Allen Lane, 2012), written jointly with Carolyn Abbate.

William Weaver translated the works of numerous Italian authors, including Umberto Eco, Italo Calvino and Primo Levi. He also maintained a great interest in Italian opera and published many translations of libretti, including those of operas by Verdi and Puccini. He died in 2013.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank John Allison of *Opera*, Charles Johnston, Mike Ashman, Giuseppe Martini of the Istituto Nazionale di Studi Verdiani and the Museo Teatrale alla Scala for their assistance and advice in the preparation of this guide and Robin Gordon-Powell for his setting of the music examples in the Thematic Guide. John Pennino of the Metropolitan Opera Archives, Mike Markiewicz of ArenaPAL and Marina Dorigo of the Archivio Storico del Teatro La Fenice all generously helped provide photographs.

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