School of Music • College of Fine Arts and Communications

La Traviata

by Giuseppe Verdi

Lawrence Vincent, *director*
Kory Katseanes, *music director & conductor*
Jennie Creer-King & Shani Olsen, *choreographers*
Boyd H. Wolz, *scenic design*
Mary Farahnakian, *costume design*
Marianne Ohran, *lighting design*
Ruth Geilman, *makeup & hair design*

Supertitles for this production of *Traviata* translated by Stacey Michael and provided by Utah Opera Company.

7:30 p.m.
Wednesday–Saturday, January 19–22
Tuesday–Saturday, January 25–29
de Jong Concert Hall, Harris Fine Arts Center

Italy, 1850

Act I

Home of Violetta 1850

Act II

Alfredo and Violetta's Country Estate, Three Months Later

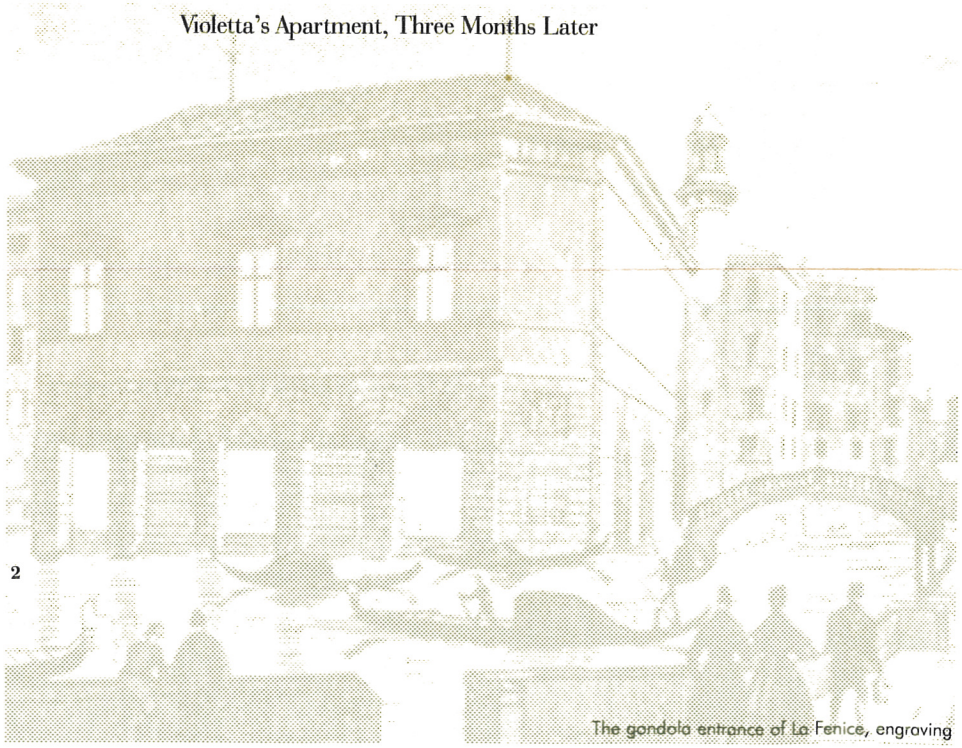
Intermission

Act III

Flora's Home, That Evening

Act IV

Violetta's Apartment, Three Months Later



The gondola entrance of La Fenice, engraving

The Cast

Violetta Valery	Lindsay R. Killian (22, 26, 28)
	Emily McCormick Malinka (20, 27, 29)
	Katherine Swigert (19, 21, 25)
Flora Bervoix	Courtney Atack (19, 21, 26, 28)
	Erin McOmber Lochhead (20, 22, 25, 27, 29)
Annina	Bessie Dean (20, 22, 25, 27, 29)
	Leah Florence (19, 21, 26, 28)
Alfredo Germont	Nathan Northrup (19, 21, 25)
	Brian Stucki (22, 26, 28)
	Lawrence Vincent (20, 27, 29)
Giorgio Germont, his father	Christopher Hopkin (19, 21, 26, 28)
	Shane Warby (20, 22, 25, 27, 29)
Gastone, Viscount of Letorieres	William Brooke (20, 22, 25, 27, 29)
	Levi Smylie (19, 21, 26, 28)
Baron Douphol	Tad Harris (20, 22, 25, 27, 29)
	David Thomas (19, 21, 26, 28)
Marquis D'Obigny	J. Joseph Malinka (21, 22, 25, 27, 29)
	Bryan Elkins (19, 21, 26, 28)
Doctor Grenvil	Bryan Ellertson
Giuseppe, servant to Violetta	Robert Lochhead (20, 22, 25, 27, 29)
	Tim Workman (19, 21, 26, 28)
Servant to Flora	Andy Fernuik
Messenger	Richard Murdock

The Chorus

Soprano
Erika Carlson
Heather Chipman
Tracy Madsen
Liz Pike
Emily Spencer
Jeanne Morrison
Sarah Christensen
Melissa Heath
Kari Smith

Mezzo
Brigette Becker
Nadia Bikhazi
Meghann Hunter
Sarah McDonald
Lyndsey Stewart
Lora Oman
Emily Shumway
Hilary Butler
Rachel Newson

Tenor
Andy Fernuik
Robert Lochhead
Timothy Workman
Scott Rooker
Joshua Gates

Bass
Richard Murdock
Elijah Cardon
James Noble
Jason Atack
Thomas Moore
Michael D. McNiven
Keith Paugh

The Gypsies

22
Emily Townsend
Julie Gulbransen
Meredith Swift
Michelle McDonald
Miranda Carter
Rhonda Green

19, 20, 21
Briana Olsen
Candice Farrington
Charlotte Batmale
Krista Olsen
Lindsay Sorensen
Rhonda Green

24, 25
Angela Scano
Carolyn Newbold
Hollie Grey Hatch
Jenny Bawden
Robin Creer
Sara Taylor

26, 27, 28, 29
Angela Scano
Carrie Denyer
Hollie Grey Hatch
Jenny Bawden
Kori New
Kristen Ayres

The Dancers

19–22
Eric Goodman
Mike Thelin
Phillip Toone
Polly Creer
Richard Lea George
Rob Cox

24–29
Anglea Scano
Brandon Seals
Jeremy Powell
Miguel Ruiz
Richard Lea George
Saia Uluave

The Orchestra

First violins
Rosalie Lund
Bryan Hernandez
Jason Swigert
Becky Roesler
Tracy Olsen
Rachel Williams
Allison Unsworth
Emily Richards
Victoria Ferris
Amy Benson
Heidi Sorenson
Allison Gagon
Ammon Starr
Kathy Ludlow
Jamilyn Herrod

Second violins
Melissa Price
Kathy Grover
Ruth Brown
Dallin Hansen
Lisa Johnston
Melissa Christensen
Nathan Christensen
Julianne Crane
Mark Oshida
Mindy Fackerell
Lexye Lund
Sam Dastrup
Amy Allred
Marilyn Bassett
Lindsay Heller
Amanda Talbot

Viola
Tessy Lund
Amanda Ridge
Angela Rushton
Carma Martino
Elizabeth Ashton
Tyler Hokansen
Chris Lewis
Jason Bonham
Emily Bolles
Debbie Aston
Jennifer Loucks

Cello
Emma Patterson
Nathanael Jasinski
Sterling Oaks
Jeremy Woolstenhume
Katie Snow
Andrea Hall
Brian Stucki
Dorothy Hardin
Kurt Scherer
Ramona Jacob
Megan Boyle
Andrew Moore

Bass
Curtis Huff
Nathan Reese
Denson Angulo
Blair Mattson
Trevor Reed
Jon Tolman
Stephen Frandsen
Scott Daniels

Harp
Anamae Anderson
MiKell MacKay DeMille

Flute
Angela Rich
Rebecca Svedin
Jennifer Murdock

Oboe
Melanie Carter
Carrie Bills
Elizabeth Young

Clarinet
Katy Boye
Erica Egli
Laura Campbell
Michelle Watabe

Bassoon
P.J. Woolston
Melissa Bitter
Jennifer Kunz

Horns
Erin Shumate
Kamber Price
Matt Croft
Laura Griffiths
Mariah Stringer
Renee Wilson

Trumpet
Dan Thrower
Sam Pierce
Melissa Clayton

Trombone
Ryan Williams
Brent Arnold
Ryan Larsen
Ben Porter

Tuba
Joe Jenson
Dan Bryce

Percussion
Tim Fellow
Kandis Bender
Mike Henrie

La Fenice auditorium

FROM FIASCO TO PHENOMENON: VERDI'S LA TRAVIATA

by Douglas Ipson

Expectations were high on March 6, 1853, when Verdi's *La Traviata* premiered at the illustrious Teatro La Fenice in Venice. His last opera for that venue, *Rigoletto,* had created a sensation two years earlier, and his one intervening production, *Il Trovatore,* staged in Rome the previous January, had also been warmly received. Yet if the directors of La Fenice anticipated an equally illustrious future for *La Traviata,* Verdi was decidedly less sanguine about its prospects. Several of his most fervent desires for the production had been thwarted by the management, to whom, they were wont to remind him, he was contractually obliged. The assembled cast in particular was clearly less than Verdi had wanted. This was especially true of the prima donna, who possessed neither the youth nor the figure he felt the leading soprano role required. In addition, Verdi maintained firmly that the opera, based on Alexandre Dumas fils's enormously popular novel (1848) and subsequent play (1850) *La Dame aux Camélias* (known better today by the truncated title *Camille*), should maintain its contemporary setting and be costumed accordingly. But the producers would not brook such a breech of convention; operas at that time were expected to have historical, not modern, settings. As a last resort, Verdi insisted that at least the story should be reset in an era which did not require the wearing of wigs. Again he was to be disappointed. The directors finally decided that the action of Dumas's story would be shifted from 1848 to the reign of Louis VIX, a century and a half earlier.

Verdi was understandably mortified by the whole state of affairs. In an angry letter to his impresario, he warned, "I tell you that, supposing the opera is performed, I have no hopes of the result—in fact it will be a complete fiasco."

Verdi in Paris, 1855

Sadly, Verdi's warning proved only too prophetic. It is one of irresistible ironies of music history that a modern repertory staple like Verdi's *La Traviata* should have met with disaster at its first performance. For the most part the singing was, as Verdi feared, less than adequate, and the critics were quick to pounce. One review prompted the lead baritone to respond in an indignant and disingenuous letter that the fault lay not in the singing, but with the score. (The critics, however, had very few qualms with Verdi's music). Perhaps worst of all, the production occasionally elicited laughter from the audience, notably during the death scene, where the sight of an overweight soprano supposedly dying of consumption was more than they could bear quietly. And while it is uncertain whether the audience was offended by the change in the story's setting, they surely must have been perplexed by it—especially since Dumas's original play (in Italian translation) was still playing across town at the Teatro Apollo.

Francesco Maria Piave

In a series of notes to friends and associates dashed off after the opening night, Verdi was at turns angry and stoical about the failure: "*La Traviata* has been an utter fiasco, and what is worse, they laughed. Well, what about it? I'm not worried. Either I'm wrong or they are. I personally don't think that last night's verdict will have been the last word."

Again Verdi was prophetic. A year later a new production of the opera was mounted at Venice's Teatro San Benedetto featuring an entirely new cast and a revised score. Unlike her predecessor, the diva of this production was up to the task both musically and physically. Verdi's faithful librettist Francesco Maria Piave assured their publisher that in "her very pallor, her exhaustion, and her entire person, everything in her comes together to make her the true incarnation of the idea of Dumas, of Verdi, and also of myself." Unfortunately, Verdi's desire to have the play's contemporary setting restored was not fulfilled until 1906—five years after his death—but by then it was hardly "contemporary." That notwithstanding, the second production of *La Traviata,* which premiered on May 8, 1854, was an overnight success and secured for the opera a place in the international repertory, which it has maintained to this day.

The resuscitation of *La Traviata's* reputation owed much to the durability both of the libretto and the music. For his part, Piave produced a libretto both suffi-

ciently poignant and appropriately concise. Possessing a keen discernment of a scene's dramatic needs, Piave could distill a lengthy passage by Dumas into forthright yet emotionally potent verse. Even his seemingly drastic omission of Dumas's entire second act, which is devoted to developing the principal two characters, serves the new work well; opera simply cannot afford the luxury of so protracted an exposition. As far as the structure of the opera is concerned, Piave is indebted enormously to the remaining four acts of Dumas's play, which unfold in a series of party scenes, extended têtes–a–têtes, and occasional soliloquies suggestive of operatic numbers. There is even a drinking song, which the opera naturally preserves. The degree to which Piave depended on the original is perhaps most evident in the lengthy duet between Violetta and Germont in Act II, in which each section clearly derives from a passage in the play's dialogue.

More than to the libretto, however, *La Traviata's* status as a masterwork is beholden to its score. Despite the carping of Verdi's baritone, it is one of the composer's most ingratiating. Perhaps no other Verdi opera possesses a greater abundance of attractive melodies. The party scenes in particular give the composer license to indulge in strings of dances and gypsy songs, meant to entertain more than anything else. Yet the gaiety (and occasionally even banality) of these tunes serve dramatic ends by acting as musical foils to the very serious drama that surrounds them. Alfredo's humiliation of Violetta in Act III, for instance, seems all the more brutal and out of place because of what has just transpired musically. In such situations, Verdi's ability to tap into the raw emotions of his characters comes fully to the fore; his is a dramatic sense even greater than Piave's. Of course, Verdi has his moments of intimacy and pathos. Violetta's desolately sad third-act aria "Addio del passato" ('Farewell to the past"), remains one of the composer's most haunting creations.

Throughout the opera, Verdi informs Dumas's play, which has the clear advantage of greater character development, with even greater poignancy and dramatic expediency. Little wonder, then, that the opera continues to be among the most performed in the repertory, while Dumas's play (except for Garbo's famous 1937 film version of it), has all but sunk into oblivion. ✣

PRODUCING STAFF

Dean, Fine Arts and Communications ..... **Bruce L. Christensen**
Executive Producer ..... **David Randall**
Producer ..... **Lawrence Vincent**
Division of Arts Production Director ..... **Jon Hollomon**
Production Manager ..... **Michael Magleby**
Events Manager ..... **Darin Bunker**
Facility Stage Manager ..... **Tom Judd**
Costumer ..... **Cathie McClellan**
Assistant Costumer ..... **Carolyn Smith**
Cutters ..... **Tara DeGrey, Gloria Pendlebury**
First Hand ..... **Priscilla Allen, Jennifer Graff, Iris Marshall**
Stitchers ..... **Kori Cramer, Deanne DeWitt, Ruth Geilman**
Janelle Jensen, Aaraina Ogzewalla, Bryn Tweedy
Costume Crafts Supervisor ..... **Emily Hoem**
Costume Crafts ..... **Ruth Geilman, Katherine Whiting**
Wardrobe Supervisor ..... **Chanel Taylor**
Stock Assistant ..... **Mary Ann Wittwer**
Hair and Makeup Supervisor ..... **Wendy Sanders**
Hair and Makeup Assistants ..... **Ruth Geilman, Andrea Kyriopoulos**
B Room ..... **Kimberly Clayton**
Technical Director ..... **Randy Mugleston**
Technical Assistant ..... **Matt Smith**
Expeditors ..... **Chris Davis, Paul Farnsworth**
Master Carpenter ..... **Frank G. Weight**
Assistant to Master Carpenter ..... **Dorin Smith**
Scenic Studio Crew ..... **Jake Bean, Paul Felt, Mark Goodman**
Mark Henrie, Travis Kohler, Steve Middleton, Nathan Rasmusson
Ben Stull, Jared Stull, Aaron Thompson, Jason Yancey
Scenic Artist ..... **Richard Clifford**
Assistant to Scenic Artists ..... **Dan Benedict, Eric Dixon, Nathan Hale**
Properties Advisor ..... **Loraine Edwards**
Prop Master ..... **Rebecca Connerley**
Prop Specialty Craftsmen ..... **Richard Clifford, Jared Stull**
Prop Assistants ..... **Heidi Reed, Catherine Sorenson**
Master Electrician ..... **Shane Withers**
Scheduling Manager ..... **Britt Pearson**
Production Assistants ..... **Wendi Keller, Misty Stay**
Event Secretaries ..... **Amy Brown, Lisa Erickson, Annie Woodbury**
Box Office Manager ..... **Paul Duerden**
Box Office Accountant ..... **T. J. Strang**
Assistant Dean, Development Director ..... **Varden Hadfield**
Marketing Manager ..... **Paul Duerden**
Publicity ..... **Carmen Berrio-Poulter, Dave Billings, Amber Blakesley**
Christina Davis, Cecilia Fielding, Megan Pugmire Spears
Publicity Photographer ..... **Mark Philbrick**
Program ..... **Megan Pugmire Spears**
House Manager ..... **Neal Cox**
Business Manager ..... **Russell Nielson**

Synopsis of *La Traviata*

Action takes place in Paris and in Environs. Circa 1850.

ACT ONE

A salon in Violetta's home

Violetta Valery, one of Paris's social elite, is throwing a sumptuous party. As guests pour in, Gastone introduces her to an ardent admirer, Alfredo Germont. Violetta has long been receiving devoted attention from the aged and wealthy Baron Douphol, who is dismayed at Alfredo's presence. Gastone proposes a toast, and the Baron refuses to lead, so the task falls to Alfredo. Alfredo toasts to love and Violetta responds with praise of pleasure. Soon dance music is heard from an adjoining room. Violetta suffers a fainting spell, but urges her guests to continue the festivities without her. Alfredo stays behind and expresses his love, which Violetta discourages in vain. She finally grants him permission to call upon her by handing him a flower and inviting him to return when it fades. After the guests leave Violetta sings of her conflicting feelings. Should she leave her life of luxury and freedom for this man's devotion? Alfredo's confession of love, heard once again from outside the house, seals her decision.

ACT TWO

A country house near Paris

Alfredo expresses his felicity now that Violetta is by his side. It has been three months since she left Paris to be with him. However, all is not well. When Annina reveals to Alfredo that Violetta has been selling her belongings in Paris to pay their expenses, he leaves immediately to right the situation. Meanwhile, Violetta enters and receives an invitation to a ball at Flora's.

Giuseppe announces the arrival of Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont. Germont accuses Violetta of his son's ruination, but is astounded when she shows him bills of sale for her own belongings. Nevertheless, he goes on to demand a sacrifice; for the sake of his second child- a daughter, and Alfredo's own future, Violetta must relinquish her love. Violetta protests that Alfredo is all she has, and she would sooner die than leave him. Germont's persistent reasoning finally convinces her and she sadly acquiesces. Violetta feels that this ultimate sacrifice for Alfredo's sake will bring the personal redemption she has sought in vain. When Germont leaves she writes a positive reply to Flora's invitation and tries to write a note of farewell to Alfredo. He returns unexpectedly; Violetta tries to hide her anguish through frenzied expressions of love and rushes out.

Shortly thereafter, Alfredo receives her note. Upon reading it, he cries out in despair. His father enters and tries to console his pain, but Alfredo will not be comforted. He discovers the invitation to Flora's and storms out, swearing his vengeance.

ACT THREE

A gallery in Flora's home

The ball at Flora's is in progress. Entertainment is provided by gypsy and matador dancing. Alfredo enters alone, to everyone's surprise. Violetta arrives next on the Baron's arm. The Baron challenges Alfredo to what becomes a tense game of chance, whereby Alfredo wins a large sum of money. When the guests adjourn for supper, Violetta remains to speak with Alfredo. He confronts her in both spiteful and imploring tones. When she confesses (under duress) that she loves the Baron, Alfredo's anger overflows. He calls out the guests and proceeds to hurl his winnings at Violetta, declaring that he has repaid her. The guests (including Germont, who has followed Alfredo to the ball) express disgust at Alfredo's insulting gesture, and Alfredo himself suffers remorse. Violetta grieves that he cannot understand the motives of her actions and the Baron challenges him to a duel.

ACT FOUR

Violetta's bedroom. Three months later.

Violetta lies ill. Doctor Grenvil stops in and offers encouragement but tells Annina the patient has but a few hours to live. Violetta unfolds a letter from Germont and reads it aloud: he has told Alfredo of her sacrifice and promises her that his son will return. But Alfredo has not appeared and Violetta fears that his arrival will come too late. The hopeless Violetta bids farewell to life and pleads for God's mercy. Festive sounds of the Carnival outside drift in and Violetta tries to dance, but her consumptive state prohibits her cheerful attempt. Annina rushes in and tries to prepare Violetta for a happy surprise: Alfredo's return. Shortly thereafter Alfredo enters the room. He reconciles with Violetta, whose joy overcomes her strength. Alfredo vows they will renew their life together far from Paris, but Violetta has not even the strength to dress. Germont arrives and looks upon her condition with horror, but Violetta is happy to be surrounded by her loved ones. She presents Alfredo with a locket bearing her image, telling him to give it to the girl he chooses to marry. Alfredo refuses to believe that they will be parted and pleads with her to fight. Suddenly a hush falls as Violetta feels her pains leaving and strength returning. This brief rapture serves not to return her to this life, but to transport her to the next. Following a final expression of joy, she falls lifeless into the arms of Alfredo.