

Pappano Conducts Verdi's *La traviata* in Concert

Saturday, May 29, 2027 · 19:00 · Barbican

Antonio Pappano, conductor · Slávka Zámečnicková, Violetta Valéry · Piotr Buszewski, Alfredo Germont · Stéphane Degout, Giorgio Germont · Marine Chagnon, Flora Bervoix · Julie Pasturaud, Annina · Carlo Bosi, Gastone · Xiaomeng Zhang, Barone Douphol · Maurizio Muraro, Doctor Grenvil · London Symphony Chorus, choir

approximately 135 minutes

Giuseppe Verdi

1813–1901

135 minutes

La traviata (complete opera, concert performance)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

The Prelude tells the story backwards. It opens with violins alone, divided, very soft and high, in the frail music that will return when Violetta is dying in Act III. Only then comes the warm, wide melody of her love for Alfredo, which will reach its full height in Act II when she cries ‘Amami, Alfredo’.

Act I is one continuous party, most of it in waltz time. The drinking song ‘Libiamo ne’ lieti calici’ (the Brindisi) is the tune everyone knows. Alfredo’s declaration, ‘Un dì, felice, eterea’, introduces a soaring phrase about love as the heartbeat of the universe, and when Violetta is left alone that phrase haunts her. Her great scene moves from the hesitant ‘Ah, fors’è lui’ to the glittering defiance of ‘Sempre libera’, with Alfredo’s voice heard from outside, pulling against her.

The centre of the opera is the long duet between Violetta and Germont in Act II. It is not an aria with interruptions but a negotiation in several stages, and the music shows her resistance giving way phrase by phrase, until ‘Dite alla giovine’ accepts the sacrifice in a broken, almost whispered line. Germont’s own aria, ‘Di Provenza il mar, il suol’, follows when he tries to console his son. The act ends at Flora’s party with a big ensemble after Alfredo throws his gambling winnings at Violetta’s feet.

Act III is spare. The Prelude's opening returns, on few instruments. Violetta reads Germont's letter aloud, speaking over a solo violin that recalls Alfredo's love theme, and sings her farewell to the past, 'Addio del passato', its vocal line broken by rests as if she cannot find the breath. The lovers' reunion duet, 'Parigi, o cara', is a gentle waltz of plans that both know are impossible. In the last moments the pain leaves her, she rises, says she feels life returning, and falls.



CONCERT PROGRAMS

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