

WNO



Rigoletto

Supported by WNO's Idloes Owen Society

Welcome to WNO's 2010 summer season, and to this revival of James Macdonald's production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

This last opera in our 'Love and Passion' series focuses on a rather less conventional love story, provoking some of humankind's worst emotions – jealousy, rage, resentment, and even murderous intention – all this culminating in an ironically tragic conclusion.

Simon Keenlyside returns to WNO, performing the title role for the first time in his career. He is joined by Welsh artists Gwyn Hughes Jones and Leah-Marian Jones as the Duke of Mantua and Maddalena respectively. WNO's David Soar sings Sparafucile and, making her UK and WNO debuts as Gilda, we welcome American soprano Sarah Coburn. Spanish conductor Pablo Heras-Casado makes his debut on the WNO podium.

This production of *Rigoletto* is the first to be credited to WNO's Idloes Owen Society, a group of people who have demonstrated their commitment to the company in a most special way – by promising a gift to us in their wills. We are hugely grateful to these supporters for their belief in WNO and our future.

I look forward to sharing these performances of this magnificent masterpiece with them, and with you.

Croeso i dymor yr haf 2010 y WNO, ac i'r adfywiad hwn o gynhyrchiad James Macdonald o *Rigoletto* Verdi.

Mae'r opera olaf hon yn ein cyfres 'Cariad ac Angerdd' yn canolbwyntio ar stori garu llai confensiynol, sydd yn ennyn rhai o'r emosiynau dynol gwaethaf – cenfigen, dicter, drwgdeimlad, a bwriad i lofruddio hyn yn oed – i gyd yn cyrraedd canlyniad eironig o trasig.

Mae Simon Keenlyside yn dychwelyd i WNO, gan berfformio'r brif ran am y tro cyntaf yn ei yrfa. Mae'r artistiaid o Gymru, Gwyn Hughes Jones a Leah-Marian Jones yn ymuno ag ef fel Dug Mantua a Maddalena yn y drefn honno. Mae David Soar o'r WNO yn canu Sparafucile a, chan ymddangos am y tro cyntaf yn y DU a chyda'r WNO fel Gilda, rydym yn croesawu'r soprano Sarah Coburn o America. Mae'r arweinydd o Sbaen, Pablo Heras-Casado, yn ymddangos am y tro cyntaf ar bodiwm y WNO.

Y cynhyrchiad hwn o *Rigoletto* yw'r cyntaf i gael ei briodoli i Gymdeithas Idloes Owen y WNO, sef gr p o bobl sydd wedi dangos eu hymrwymiad i'r cwmni mewn ffordd arbennig iawn – trwy addo rhodd i ni yn eu hewyllys. Rydym yn eithriadol o ddiolchgar i'r cefnogwyr hyn am gredu yn y WNO ac yn ein dyfodol.

Edrychaf ymlaen at rannu perfformiadau'r campwaith hwn gyda hwy, a chyda chi.



John Fisher

Chief Executive & Artistic Director | Prif Weithredwr a Chyfarwyddwr Artistig

Rigoletto



Opera in three acts
by Giuseppe Verdi

Text by Francesco Maria Piave
after Victor Hugo's play *Le Roi s'amuse* (Paris, 1832)

First performance at Teatro La
Fenice, Venice on 11 March 1851

First performance of this
production at New Theatre,
Cardiff on 3 May 2002

Sung in Italian with
English surtitles
(and Welsh surtitles in Cardiff)

Supported by WNO's Idloes Owen Society

All performances start at 7.15pm

Cardiff Wales Millennium Centre

Friday 25 June 2010
Monday 28 June 2010
Friday 2 July 2010

Birmingham Hippodrome

Wednesday 7 July 2010
Friday 9 July 2010

Cast

The Duke of Mantua Gwyn Hughes Jones

Borsa, *courtier* Cárthaigh Quill

Countess Ceprano Claire Hampton

Rigoletto, *jester to the Duke* Simon Keenlyside

Marullo, *courtier* Alastair Moore

Count Ceprano, *courtier* Martin Lloyd

Monterone Michael Druiett

Sparafucile, *hired assassin* David Soar

Gilda, *Rigoletto's daughter* Sarah Coburn


Giovanna, *his housekeeper* Neda Bizzarri

Page Laura Pooley

Usher Stephen Wells

Maddalena, *Sparafucile's sister* Leah-Marian Jones

Chorus of courtiers



Conductor	Pablo Heras-Casado
Director	James Macdonald
Designer	Robert Innes Hopkins
Lighting Designer	Simon Mills
Lighting realised by	Paul Woodfield
Choreographer	Stuart Hopps
Chorus Master	Stephen Harris
Assistant Conductor	Simon Phillippo
Musical Preparation	Mark Packwood
Staff Director	Caroline Chaney
Language Coach	Maria Grazia Gould
Stage Manager	Liz Walker
Production Manager	Richard Norton

Scenery built and painted by Cardiff Theatrical Services Ltd
Properties, costumes and wigs by Welsh National Opera
Wheelchair supplied by Invacare

English surtitles by Simon Rees
Welsh surtitles by Mary Jones

Front cover photograph © Jacques Lowe

The performance lasts approximately 2 hours 25 minutes
There will be intervals after Act 1 scene 2 and Act 2

Contents

Plot Summary	6
Synopsis	8
Verdi's darkest theme	Simon Rees 11
Verdi and Victor Hugo: <i>Rigoletto</i> and <i>Le Roi s'amuse</i>	Tom Rosenthal 16
From Victor Hugo's preface to <i>Le Roi s'amuse</i>	23
Grotesque greatness	Jonathan Keates 25
The Dramatic Baritone	Chris Ball 31
Biographies	34
Orchestra and Chorus List	44
WNO More Information	46

Introduction

Verdi based *Rigoletto* on Victor Hugo's play *Le Roi s'amuse*. Censorship in Venice forced him to change the location from Paris to Mantua, converting Francis 1 into the Duke of Mantua, and the jester Triboulet into Rigoletto. Written around the same time as *La traviata* and *Il trovatore*, *Rigoletto* was one of Verdi's greatest successes, freeing him from the burden of his years of forced composition, and granting him financial as well as artistic independence. It gives demanding roles to a high-lying baritone (Rigoletto), a lyric coloratura soprano (Gilda), a tenor (the Duke) and a mezzo soprano (Maddalena). Rigoletto's 'Cortigiani', Gilda's 'Caro nome', the Duke's 'Questa o quella' and the sublime quartet 'Bella figlia dell'amore' are among Verdi's greatest works for these voices.

Plot Summary

Rigoletto, jester to the Duke of Mantua, abets his master's serial seduction of the women of his court. Rigoletto has a daughter, Gilda, whom he keeps hidden away, unknown to the courtiers, who suspect him of hiding a mistress. Monterone, whose daughter has been violated by the Duke, curses Rigoletto. An assassin, Sparafucile, offers Rigoletto his services. Rigoletto returns home to Gilda, but goes out again, leaving Gilda to an assignation with the Duke, who has come disguised as a poor student. When the 'student' has gone, the courtiers abduct Gilda, intending to present her to their master. Rigoletto searches the court for his daughter, but the Duke has already taken her to bed. Rigoletto swears revenge, and pays Sparafucile to assassinate the Duke. The Duke arrives at Sparafucile's hut, lured by his sister Maddalena. Gilda and Rigoletto watch through the walls. Gilda learns what her father plans to do, and returns in disguise to offer herself as Sparafucile's victim. Rigoletto collects the sack with the body, and finds – too late – that it contains his dying daughter.

Cyflwyniad

Seiliodd Verdi ei *Rigoletto* ar y ddrama *Le Roi s'amuse* gan Victor Hugo. Roedd sensoriaeth yn Fenis wedi ei orfodi i symud o Baris i Mantua, i droi'r Brenin Francis 1 yn Dug Mantua a'r clown Triboulet yn Rigoletto. Cafodd *Rigoletto* ei hysgrifennu tua'r un amser â *La traviata* ac *Il trovatore*, a'r opera hon oedd un o lwyddiannau mawr Verdi, gan ei ryddhau o'r baich o flynyddoedd o orfod cyfansoddi, a rhoi iddo annibyniaeth ariannol yn ogystal ag artistig. Creodd rannau anodd i fariton uchel (Rigoletto), soprano coloratura delynegol (Gilda), tenor (y Dug) a mezzo soprano (Maddalena). Mae aria Rigoletto 'Cortigiani', aria Gilda 'Caro nome', aria'r Dug 'Questa o quella' a'r pedwarawd godidog 'Bella figlia dell'amore' ymhlith gweithiau mwyaf Verdi i'r lleisiau hyn.

Y Stori'n Gryno

Mae Rigoletto, y clown yn llys Dug Mantua, yn cynorthwyo'i feistr yn ei arfer o hudo merched ei lys. Mae gan Rigoletto ferch o'r enw Gilda. Mae'n ei chelu rhag dynion y llys, ac mae'r rheiny'n drwgdybio fod ganddo feistres. Mae Monterone, gan fod ei ferch ei hun wedi ei threisio gan y Dug, yn melltithio Rigoletto. Daw Sparafucile, y llofrudd, i gynnig ei wasanaeth i Rigoletto. Mae Rigoletto yn mynd adre at Gilda, ond mae'n mynd allan eto gan adael Gilda i gyfarfod â'r Dug, sydd wedi ei wisgo fel myfyriwr tlawd. Ar ôl i'r 'myfyriwr' ymadael, mae dynion y llys yn cipio Gilda gan fwriadu ei chyflwyno i'w meist. Mae Rigoletto yn chwilio ym mhob man yn y llys am ei ferch, ond mae'r Dug eisoes wedi mynd â hi i'w wely. Mae Rigoletto yn tyngu i ddial ac yn talu Sparafucile i ladd y Dug. Daw'r Dug i gaban Sparafucile, wedi ei ddenu gan Maddalena, chwaer Sparafucile. Mae Gilda a Rigoletto yn gwylio drwy'r mur. Mae Gilda yn clywed yr hyn mae'n ei fwriadu ac mae'n dychwelyd mewn gwisg ddieithr i gynnig ei hun yn lle'r Dug. Daw Rigoletto i nôl y sach a'r corff ynddi, ond yn darganfod – yn rhy hwyr – mai ei ferch sydd ynddi a'i bod ar fin marw.



Francesco Maria Piave,
Rigoletto's librettist

Synopsis

Act 1 Scene 1

Preludio,
introduzione e
ballata *Questa o
quella per me pari
sono*

A party is in progress. The Duke tells Borsa about a girl he has seen at church. He has followed her home, and has seen a man visit her late at night. The Duke is keen to find out more about her. He then notices Ceprano's wife, and flirts with her, infuriating her husband. Marullo has news: Rigoletto, the Duke's jester, apparently, has a mistress. Rigoletto encourages the Duke to make fun of Ceprano. The courtiers agree that it's time to get their own back on Rigoletto, as they have all suffered from his verbal abuse. Monterone demands a showdown with the Duke, who has seduced his daughter. Rigoletto makes fun of him, and Monterone is arrested. Monterone curses both the Duke and Rigoletto. Rigoletto is particularly disturbed by the curse.

Act 1 Scene 2

Duetto *Quel vecchio
maledivami*

Scena e duetto
*Pari siamo!... Figlia!
....Mio padre! A te
dappresso*

Rigoletto, on his way home, is accosted by Sparafucile, a professional hit-man who offers his services if Rigoletto should ever need them. Rigoletto observes that he and Sparafucile are the same: both practise assassination, one verbally, the other with a weapon.

His daughter Gilda meets him, and asks him what is the matter. She wants to know more about her mother and her family: she doesn't even know her own surname. Rigoletto refuses to tell her. He warns her not to leave the house and checks with the maid Giovanna that the street door is always locked. As Rigoletto rushes out on hearing a noise in the street, the Duke slips in and bribes Giovanna to keep quiet. When Rigoletto comes back to say goodbye to Gilda, the Duke realises that the girl he has been pursuing is Rigoletto's daughter. When Rigoletto has gone, the Duke

Scena e duetto
*Signor È il sol
dell'anima*

claims that he is a student, Gaultier Maldé. He and Gilda declare their love for one another. Hearing someone coming, Giovanna takes him out by the street door. Gilda, left alone, meditates on the name of the man she loves.

Scena ed aria *Caro
nome che il mio cor*

Scena e coro-finale
primo *Zitti, zitti,
moviamo a vendetta*

The courtiers have gathered to kidnap Rigoletto's 'mistress' and he finds them in the street outside his house. They tell him that they are planning to make off with Ceprano's wife. Rigoletto agrees to help them. They blindfold him and make him hold a ladder against Ceprano's garden wall. They kidnap Gilda. Rigoletto realises (too late) that Monterone's curse has come back to haunt him.

Act 2

Preludio, scena ed
aria *Parmi veder le
lagrime*

The Duke has found out that Gilda has been kidnapped. He is appalled at what she must have suffered. The courtiers arrive and recount their adventure. The Duke demands to see Gilda. It is time for him to tell her who he really is. Rigoletto searches for his daughter and realises that she must be with the Duke. He tries to reach her, but is held back by the courtiers, and denounces them bitterly. Gilda rushes to him. He tries to pretend that the kidnapping was a joke, but then realises what has happened. She tells him about the stranger she saw in church, and how she was kidnapped. Monterone is led to prison. Rigoletto swears to get his revenge.

Scena ed aria
*Cortigiani, vil razza
dannata*

Scena e duetto
*Tutte le feste al
tempio*

Act 3

Preludio, scena e
canzone *La donna è
mobile*

Quartetto *Un di, se
ben rammentomi...
Bella figlia
dell'amore*

Scena, terzetto e
tempesta *Venti
scudi hai tu detto*

Scena e duetto
finale *V'ho
ingannato!...
Colpevole fui*

Rigoletto brings Gilda to Sparafucile's place, to show her that the Duke is two-timing her. Disguised in uniform, the Duke sings about women's unfaithfulness. Maddalena, Sparafucile's sister, joins him, while Sparafucile finds Rigoletto and tell him that his enemy has arrived. Gilda watches the Duke flirting with Maddalena and is heartbroken. Rigoletto tells Gilda to disguise herself as a man and go to another town, where he will join her. He pays Sparafucile half his fee, and promises to return at midnight to pay the rest when the Duke has been killed, and his body delivered to him in a sack.

A storm forces the Duke to stay the night at Sparafucile's. Gilda returns, now dressed as a man, and hears Maddalena trying to persuade Sparafucile not to kill the Duke, but to murder Rigoletto instead. Sparafucile is unwilling to double-cross a client, but agrees that if anyone arrives by chance before midnight, he will kill him instead of the Duke. Gilda decides to die in the Duke's place. As the storm reaches its height, she knocks at the door.

The storm dies down. At midnight, Rigoletto comes back to collect the sack with the body. He is about to throw it into the river when he hears the Duke singing. He tears open the sack and finds his daughter half-dead. She dies in his arms. Monterone's curse has been fulfilled.

Verdi's darkest theme

Simon Rees

'An unhappy father who weeps over his daughter's honour, which has been stolen; mocked by a court jester, whom the father curses; and this curse strikes the jester in the most terrifying way, this seems moral to me and great, stupendously great.'

To find what inspired Verdi to his greatest achievements of imagination, the best place to turn is his voluminous and eloquent correspondence. As in the letters of Mozart and the conversation books of Beethoven, we find the work of creativity laid out before us, with all the ragged edges and loose ends that would later be trimmed and tidied. The heart of the inspiration for *Rigoletto* (as it was eventually called) is in the central relationship of father and daughter between Rigoletto and Gilda, and its shadow in the betrayed Monterone and his unnamed daughter, an earlier victim of the Duke.

At the time of composition, in 1851, Venice was under Austrian rule, and composers and librettists were subject to Austrian censorship. It was His Excellency the Signor Military Governor Cavalier de Gorzkowski whose office issued the first prohibition to Verdi and his librettist Piave to set Victor Hugo's tragedy *Le Roi s'amuse*.

Many details in the original play – the immorality of a reigning French monarch, the King unlocking the bedroom door with obvious intentions on Gilda, the botched assassination and the body in the sack – appalled the authorities and led to an immediate ban on any adaptation. It was only after lengthy negotiation that Verdi and Piave obtained permission to set Hugo's play with only a few significant changes, the main one being the conversion of King Francis I of France into the Duke of Mantua – whom everyone knew to have been a Gonzaga, and a member of a family still alive and active in Venice. Rigoletto remained a hunchback, his daughter remained a victim of the Duke's lust, and the body stayed in the sack.

While all of these discussions were in progress, Verdi had already begun work on the music. The frustrations of bureaucratic obstruction were heightened by his realisation that in *Rigoletto* he was writing some of his greatest music, and likely achieve one of his greatest successes. His last few operas (the revolutionary *Battaglia di Legnano*, driven from the stage by the ending of the 1848 uprisings; *Luisa Miller*, which failed to enter the main Verdian canon; *Stiffelio* with its continual trouble with

ensorship) had had only lukewarm or transient successes. The next trio, beginning with *Rigoletto* and continuing with *Il trovatore* and *La traviata*, were triumphs. In *Rigoletto*, initially the most successful of the three, Verdi drew most deeply on the theme that inspired his most passionately personal work, the relationship between father and daughter.

The original working title of the opera, *La maledizione*, or *The Curse*, points at the central motor of the plot: Monterone laying his curse on Rigoletto when the court jester mocks the afflicted father because his master the Duke has seduced Monterone's daughter. The simple mechanism that drives the play and the libretto is the reflection back onto Rigoletto of the same terrible curse. And it is in the references to the curse that the music takes on its darkest and most emotionally driven colours, painted with an orchestration that went beyond anything Verdi had hitherto attempted, murky and brooding with the colours of cor anglais, trombones and cimbasso, which reflect and reinforce the colours of Rigoletto's baritone voice. In the C minor Preludio that the bassoons, horns, trumpets, trombones and cimbasso, backed with a foreboding roll on the timpani, spell out for the first time the rhythm of 'Quel

vecchio maledivami' – 'That old man put his curse on me.' Tremolando strings underlie the next statement of this double-dotted rhythm. The whole effect is to establish a sombre, portentous mood of Gothic-horror that matches Victor Hugo's tragedy in all its grotesqueness and cynicism.

Rigoletto's hunchback and limping gait seem to take their rhythm from this halting theme, and pass it back into the music of the opera by way of his first appearance, in which he uses a similar dot-and-carry-one to mock and jibe at the courtiers, whom he hates and envies so bitterly. As so often in his characterisation, Verdi avoids a full-out bel canto vocal style for his principal character, and instead colours his voice with rasping phrases, or forces it high up the register to a piping, querulous tone, all in search of a portrayal of the jester in his court mode, in costume and tumbling for a living. It is only when Rigoletto has gone home that his tenderness and lyricism are allowed to emerge, in a transformation that is as startling as the revelation that at home he keeps a beautiful daughter hidden from sight, especially from the eyes of his lecherous master, the Duke.

In the meantime, the Duke has been displayed to us as a heartless, charming seducer,

who uses not just his status but also his handsome presence and guileful tongue to go about his Don Giovanni-like conquests. In his first aria, 'Questa o quella' he sets out his philosophy as clearly as Mozart's Don. If he had no charm, and Rigoletto had no gentle, humane side, then the opera would be flat and one-dimensional. It is the gradual revelation, through the vocal writing and its orchestral accompaniment, of the Duke's brutality and Rigoletto's flawed and vulnerable humanity, that gives the opera its greatness.

The great Scene and Duet between Rigoletto and Gilda, that begins with the words 'Pari siamo' as Rigoletto recognises the similarity between himself and the assassin Sparafucile, one armed with a knife and the other with his tongue, drops through depths of darkness in his meditation on the curse, to rise to the fortissimo outburst against the courtiers, to break into the courtly, sprightly music of his meeting with Gilda with its dance-like rhythms in the strings, to settle to the pathos of 'Deh non parlare al misero' in which Rigoletto tells his daughter of her dead mother. Rigoletto's broken, dotted phrases connect the character of the jester we have seen earlier to that of the father and widower, lamenting his dead wife and trying to protect his daughter. The insistent

heartbeat of the orchestral accompaniment provokes and sustains our emotional response to what for Verdi was the great tragedy of his own life: the loss of his wife and their own two children. Always in his operas it is this relationship that seems to bring out his most moving and heartrending music: here, and again in the Act 2 duet in *La traviata*, and later in Ford's outburst of rage and grief in *Falstaff*.

Gilda's love for the man she believes to be the student Gualtier Maldé is expressed with a tenderness and sweetness that still allows Verdi to use coloratura in its full bel canto floridity to show that Gilda is no child but an adult young woman, mature enough to fall in love, and strong enough to encounter with fortitude and courage the assaults she suffers, and the self-sacrifice she decides to make, in a way that we believe in her independence from the start. Just as Rigoletto's high tessitura demands a baritone who can sing without apparent strain some of Verdi's most difficult vocal writing, so the role of Gilda demands from a soprano that she should bring to the complex filigree of vocal ornamentation a sense of freshness, innocence and strength of will.

It is in the great Quartet, both its opening Allegro 'Un dì, se ben rammentomi' and the astonishing Andante 'Bella figlia dell'amore', that Verdi shows us the full greatness of his genius, in weaving together the four voices of Gilda's soprano, Maddelena's mezzo, the Duke's tenor and Rigoletto's baritone in a way that brings out the individual character of each and takes contrapuntal writing to new summits of dramatic achievement. The Duke's line is lilting and seductive, charming, sexy and full of flirtatious ornament, but with steel and determination underlying the charm. Maddelena chuckles and giggles as if being irresistibly tickled, and her bubbling vocal line runs alongside and against the Duke's as if the two were in a competition to see who could be the most effective seducer. Rigoletto's line groans out, with his characteristic halting rhythms, his warning to Gilda, and Gilda's lament in turn progresses from a sustained phrase into a second subject that sobs and gasps for breath in slurred, leaping pairs of semiquavers, her heart breaking as she sees her lover in the arms of Sparafucile's no-good sister, with the assassin waiting in the shadows with his knife.

The Gothic horror of the storm, the murder and the discovery of the body by flashes of lightning could, in the hands of a lesser composer, have descended into melodramatic Grand Guignol. But in Verdi's control of his orchestral score, his restrained use of *sostenuto* low strings and lightning-flash outbursts of flute and piccolo, the master retains command of emotion, building the horror of the final revelation of whose body lies there in the sack until the audience can bear the tension and suspense no more. While the vocal lines of Rigoletto, Sparafucile and Gilda are reduced to fragmented mutterings, murmurings and moans of pain and fear, the Duke's offstage reiteration of the ineffable 'La donna è mobile' is almost a parody of his character. Like Till Eulenspiegel and other operatic rogues and villains, he has escaped the noose, the knife, the sack and the river, and lives to sing on. Rigoletto and his daughter have moved beyond the operatic musical certainties of *bel canto* into a darker, harsher world of separation and death, and the orchestra, its heart pounding with ours, follows them there, and leaves them at the last cry of 'Ah! la maledizione!'

Simon Rees © 2005



Giuseppe Verdi in 1853

Verdi and Victor Hugo: *Rigoletto* and *Le Roi s'amuse*

Tom Rosenthal

Compared to, say *Hernani*, Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'amuse* is a very simple play which is doubtless why Verdi's *Rigoletto*, unusually in the complex relationship of libretto to original literary work, is so faithful to the stage play.

Hernani, while a huge *succès de scandale*, actually involved Hugo with virtually no censorship trouble, not least because the censors were for the most part elderly playwright rivals of the much disliked newcomer. They deliberately left untouched a scene with the king being stuffed into a broom closet, to conceal him at a key moment, knowing that such appalling *lèse majesté* would scupper Hugo. As history relates, it did not.

Le Roi s'amuse on the other hand had no *succès de scandale* – only *scandale*. With the hindsight of 170 years it is mind boggling to contemplate Hugo's sheer bravado when he put on a play, 22 November 1832, which portrayed one of France's most celebrated monarchs, François I, as a compulsive lecher and seducer of his courtiers' wives and daughters. Its instant banning by ministerial fiat the morning after its first night is

totally unsurprising. One cannot but wonder whether Verdi himself who, after all, had momentous censorship battles of his own with *Ernani*, *Un ballo in maschera* and *Rigoletto* itself, did not – also perhaps have at least a subconscious taste for rebellion and a good fight with the jobsworths who decided what could and could not appear on Italy's operatic stages.

With Hugo the desire to mix it with the authorities was definitely not subconscious. According to Graham Robb's great biography, Hugo probably had trouble in mind from the beginning. His publishing contract for the text of the play contained a clause cancelling it if the play was censored, which does, as Robb puts it, 'suggest precognition.'

Always a battler, not least because censorship had been abolished after the Revolution of 1830, Hugo made an impassioned speech:

'Today, my freedom as a poet is taken by a censor; tomorrow, my freedom as a citizen will be taken by a policeman. Today, I am banished from the theatre; tomorrow I shall be banished



from the land. Today, I am gagged; tomorrow, I shall be deported. Today, a state of siege exists in literature; tomorrow, it will exist in the city.'

But angry words were not enough for the French firebrand. He sued the *Comédie Française* but the judges declared that they were not competent to decide the matter and poor Hugo was ordered to

pay the costs. He also asked for his government pension to be discontinued (one feels that Hugo and Verdi were in many ways kindred spirits.)

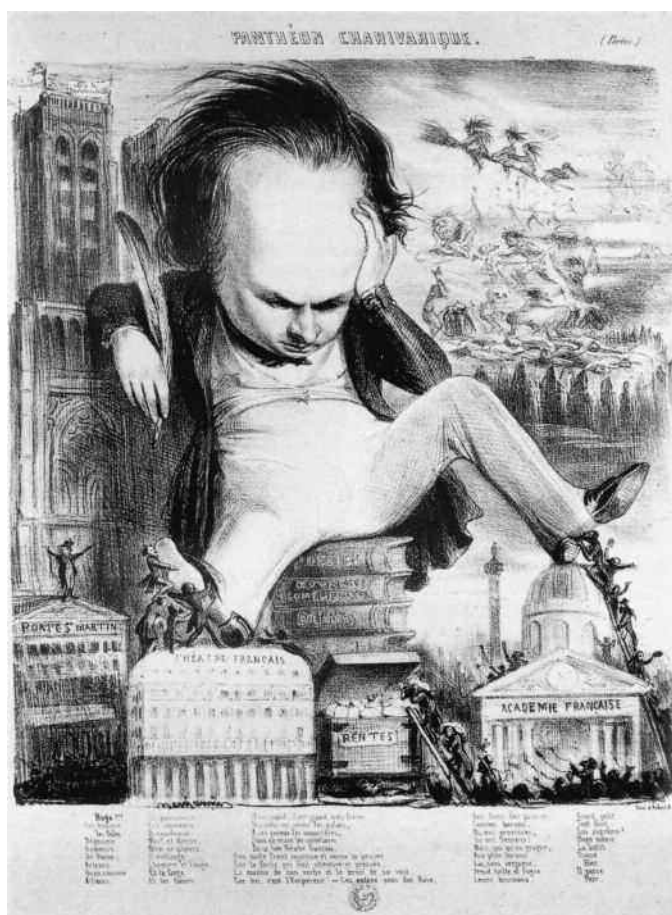
On 30 November, only a week after the banning of the play, Hugo published his Preface. It contains many memorable lines, not the least of which is:

'In France whoever is persecuted has no longer an enemy except the persecutor.'

It also has a long exegesis of the action of the play, which is probably the most lucid account available of the driving force of *Rigoletto* and is reproduced in this programme book. It shows unerringly why *Le Roi s'amuse* is a great play in which the ironies and cruelties of the plot,

together with the working out of the wronged courtier's curse create an almost unbearable tension and the bleakest of horrors. You can see why, for a time, Verdi called the opera *La Maledizione* (*The Curse*).

Apart from a tendency towards what Julian Budden, doyen of all Verdi scholars, calls not too kindly but not unfairly 'romantic



rodomontade', there is a fearsome, cold logic about the play and its construction so that surely, if Verdi had not pre-empted further efforts, any of the minor 19th century opera composers would have gladly written a musical version of it. Even if at times some of the speeches outstayed their welcome, most notably the seemingly endless expressions of obsessive paternal love from Triboulet (Rigoletto) to Blanche (Gilda), the sheer mechanics of the play are so perfectly wrought that no composer, not even Verdi, needs to add or subtract anything by way of action. All the librettist (Piave) and Verdi needed to do was prune the lengthier speeches. The only significant plot omission in the opera is the scene in which Blanche, fleeing the advances of the King, panics and runs into his bedroom, leaving the King to set up the *de facto* off-stage rape by using his key to lock her in. Even Verdi, fearless as always, knew that would not get by the censors. Oddly enough this subject obtruded itself when the husband of one of Verdi's Gildas, Teresa De Giuli, asked Verdi to compose an extra aria for her. With much patience, and some humour, Verdi responded:

'If you could have convinced yourself that my talent limits me to being unable to do any better with *Rigoletto* than I've

done already, you wouldn't have asked me for another aria... In fact, where would you find a place for it? ...'

'Well, there is one place – but God forbid we should try it – we should be flayed alive! We would have to show the Duke and Gilda in the bedroom!! Do you see what I mean?! ...'

Apart from having in finest Mills and Boon tradition, to keep the bedroom door closed, Verdi's only infidelity to Hugo is the changing of time, place and nomenclature. You didn't have to have lived under Italian censorship for years to see that François I had to go. He was a notable king of France and Hugo's treatment of him would barely have got by our own Lord Chamberlain when British audiences had to put up with an often equally foolish – and even longer-lived – nannying of supposedly adult audiences. François famously observed, after his defeat at the Battle of Pavia in 1525, 'Of all I had, only honour and life have been spared.' Which is pretty rich, considering his morals. Whoever spared him his honour didn't spare him much. He was however, a gift to a dramatist like Hugo who was well aware of the words that the King had scratched on a window-frame at Chambord, 'Women are often fickle ...' (And what a gift that one line was to Verdi, *La donna*

è *mobile* being perhaps the most popular of all the composers' tenor arias).

Verdi, while not changing Hugo's plot structure in any way, does perhaps pay slightly more attention to the Duke than Hugo does to the King. He once wrote to another of his librettists, Antonio Somma, that *Le Roi s'amuse* is:

'the best subject as regards theatrical effect that I've ever set to music. It has powerful situations, variety, excitement, pathos; all the vicissitudes arise from the frivolous, rakish personality of the Duke.'

For Hugo of course the principal drama was that of Triboulet, the ultimate anguished court-jester. To be fair, if Verdi enhances the King/Duke's significance, it is certainly not at the expense of Rigoletto, who not only gets the opera title but also, if not superficially the most attractive, surely the opera's most passionate, most moving music.

There is however one aspect of the play not reflected in the opera, simply because of the usual exigencies of compression. Hugo devotes much more space, and many pages of verse, to the relationship between King and jester, which is, in its shifts of power over courtiers and indeed even between monarch and

hunchback, subtly and intricately depicted. Frankly, Triboulet is much nastier in Hugo than Rigoletto is in Verdi, but Hugo shrewdly makes Triboulet remorselessly self-aware. When he parts from Saltabadil (the assassin Sparafucile), he says:

'How much alike his cruel trade is to mine: -
His sword is sharp, but with a tongue more keen
I stab the heart! Aye, deeper far than he.'
In the opera the Duke has nothing as callous as the King's response when the helpless Blanche/Gilda invokes her father's protection:

'My poor Buffoon! my fool! my Triboulet!
Thy father's mine! - my property! my slave!
His will's mine own!'

One can see why Verdi was so gripped by the drama and kept on re-iterating his passion for it to Piave, one of the several librettists to whom he laid down the ineluctable law that the composer is always right:

'Oh *Le Roi s'amuse* is the greatest plot, and perhaps the greatest drama of modern times. Triboulet [sic] is a creation worthy of Shakespeare!! It is a subject that cannot fail. You know that six years ago, when Mocenigo suggested *Ernani* to

me, I exclaimed: "Yes, by God, that's the right one." ... Turn Venice upside down to make the censors permit this subject.'

Verdi's battles with the censors were as absurd and as heroic as ever, but as we know, in the end he won, although it is odd that he and Piave got away with turning François I into the Duke of Mantua. The family name of the real life Duke was Gonzaga and there is a nice irony – intended by Verdi perhaps? – in that Vincenzo Gonzaga had been the patron of Monteverdi, the father of Italian opera.

There is a further irony in that Verdi turned to *Le Roi s'amuse* after yet another colloquy with *King Lear*, which, not for the only time in his career, was temporarily abandoned and which eventually became, surely, the greatest opera never written.

The substitution must have been relatively painless since the father / daughter relationship so beloved by Verdi is, in *Rigoletto*, of Shakespearean intensity and there is at the very least a parallel between Lear with the dead Cordelia, and Rigoletto with the dead Gilda. And one can't help wondering about the fascinating King and Jester relationship which also links *Lear* with *Le Roi s'amuse* ... *Le Roi s'amuse* (and of course *Rigoletto*) are, regardless of where they are set and what the

characters are called, completely timeless in the way that all great dramas, from the Greeks to Ibsen, are timeless. The style may change from Hugo's, to our ears, rather heavy and even long-winded verse to Verdi's and Piave's brilliant compression to another version written only six years ago. In 1996 the Royal National Theatre put on Tony Harrison's version, in rhyming couplets, of the Hugo. He called it *The Prince's Play* so that we switch from François I in Paris, bypass the Duke of Mantua, and get instead, some time in the 1880s, the Prince of Wales and his court of British peers and wealthy hangers-on. The play opens in a music hall not unlike the old Bedford, and Triboulet (Rigoletto) is a bawdy Scottish comedian called Scotty Scott, his daughter is Becky and the assassin Sparafucile is the Diddicoy, (a variant of the Roman word for an itinerant tinker).

The plot is remarkably unchanged in what is after all, a free adaptation rather than a translation; what Robert Lowell called Imitation.

But Harrison's ironies are just as savage as Hugo's. Becky tells HRH:

'At least I know you're not one of those peers my poor old father always says he fears.'

The jester is totally brutal with himself:

'There's nothing in a hump to make you proud,
I burn with envy at the well-endowed.'

Victor Hugo may well have had an obsession with cripples in general and hunchbacks in particular. His principal protagonists include not only Triboulet but, most celebrated of all, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and, in an earlier play, *Marion de Lorme* (also banned), to quote Robb, 'Another human gargoyle lolloped across the stage.' At the first, and only night in 1832 of *Le Roi s'amuse*, Hugo's painter friends the Devérias turned up with some relatives, one of whom was a hunchback. Not surprisingly when Triboulet limped on to the stage they walked out.

But that was a highly specific, personal and completely understandable reaction. For the rest of the audience, even without the sense of shock over the mordant portrayal of a French monarch, the play was overpowering as it still is today, whether in straight theatrical form or as opera. Rarely can the biter have been bit with such savagery. Even more rarely, outside the range of Jacobean drama can there have been so cruel a revenge. Webster and

Tourneur could have learned from Hugo and for opera goers, faced with a half-way decent performance, the relentless power of Verdi's music simply turns the screw on the hunchback – and on ourselves – almost beyond bearing.

As the Italian composer Alberto Mazzucato (whose own opera based on Hugo's *Hernani* had disappeared as soon as Verdi wrote his) observed of Verdi in his diary, 'He became insuperable with *Rigoletto* ...'

Tom Rosenthal © 2002



From Victor Hugo's preface to *Le Roi s'amuse*

The piece is immoral? Think you so? Is it from its subject?

Triboulet is deformed, Triboulet is unhealthy, Triboulet is a court buffoon – a threefold misery which renders him evil.

Triboulet hates the king because he is king, the nobles because they are nobles, and he hates ordinary men because they have not humps on their backs. His only pastime is to set the nobles unceasingly against the king, crushing the weaker by the stronger. He depraves the king, corrupts and stultifies him; he encourages him in tyranny, ignorance and vice. He lures him to the families of gentlemen, pointing out the wife to seduce, the sister to carry off, the daughter to dishonour. The king in the hands of Triboulet is but an all-powerful puppet which ruins the lives of those in the midst of whom the buffoon sets him to play. One day, in the midst of a fete, at the moment when Triboulet is urging the king to carry off the wife of M de Cossé, M de Saint-Vallier reaches the presence chamber, and in a loud voice reproaches the king for the dishonour of Diana de Poitiers. This father, from whom the king has taken his daughter, is jeered at and insulted by Triboulet. Then the father stretches forth his hand

and curses Triboulet. It is from this scene the whole play develops. The real subject of the drama is the curse of M de Saint-Vallier. Attend. You are in the second act. On whom has this curse fallen? On Triboulet as the king's fool? No. On Triboulet as a man, a father who has a heart and has a daughter. Triboulet has a daughter, all in that is expressed. Triboulet has but his daughter in the world, and he hides her from all eyes in a solitary house in a deserted quarter. The more he spreads in the town the contagion of debauchery and vice, the more he seeks to isolate and immure his daughter. He brings up his child in faith, innocence, and modesty. His greatest fear is that she may fall into evil, for he knows, being himself wicked, all the wretchedness that is endured by evil-doers. Well, now! The old man's malediction will reach Triboulet through the only being in the world whom he loves, his daughter. This same king whom Triboulet urges to pitiless vice will be the ravisher of Triboulet's daughter. The buffoon will be struck by Providence precisely in the same manner as was M de Saint-Vallier. And more, his daughter once ruined, he lays a snare for the king by which to avenge her; but it is she that

falls into it. Thus Triboulet has two pupils – the king and his daughter – the king, whom he has trained to vice, his daughter, whom he has reared for virtue. The one destroys the other. He intends Madame de Cossé to be carried off for the king, and so avenge his child' it is his daughter whom he slays. Punishment does not stop halfway; the malediction of Diana's father is fulfilled on the father of Blanche.

Undoubtedly it is not for us to decide if this is a dramatic idea, but certainly it is a moral one...

Grotesque greatness

Jonathan Keates

Everything Victor Hugo did made headlines. One might almost say that he saw to that. Even his funeral procession through the streets of Paris was international news, so much so that Queen Victoria, probably rather jealous of the attention in her capacity as a fellow egomaniac, felt she needed to get a personal account of the proceedings from her hard-pressed ambassador Lord Lyons. The British had always followed his exploits, whether as an endlessly versatile writer or as a larger-than-life human being, responding to him with a typical mixture of awe, envy and prudish distaste. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, while admired for its 'graphic vraisemblance', had been judged too unbearably powerful 'as the terrible wrecks of unhallowed and ungovernable passion come drifting across the dark'. *Les Misérables* made him for many 'the literary Titan of the age', yet was simultaneously condemned for its indecency, profanity and general inappropriateness for family reading, though the novelist George Meredith probably spoke for most Victorian readers when he observed that 'Hugo's occasional dirty speech is just a part of his grotesque greatness'. Thirty years before *Les Misérables* its author's success as a dramatist had first alerted

readers on this side of the Channel to the particular problems Britons might have with that 'grotesque greatness'. Surprisingly his most controversial play *Hernani* had gained little attention from foreign reviewers when it received its stormy Paripremière in 1830. Giuseppe Verdi's operatic treatment of the drama was still a long way off, and reaction to Hugo's flagrant assault on the proprieties of the French classical stage, among those not involved personally or emotionally in the famous first-night 'bataille', was one of modified interest in the drama's 'strange and altogether original character'.

Two years later however, when *Le Roi s'amuse* received its sole performance on 22 November 1832, the reaction was very different. London magazines kept a sharp eye on cultural trends in Paris – no less a writer than Stendhal, after all, had busied himself with regular round-ups of books and plays for the *New Monthly Magazine*, the *Athenaeum* and others. A distinct awareness had developed as to where the new French Romantic drama was leading, in the hands not only of Victor Hugo, but of playwrights like Alexandre Dumas and Alfred de Vigny. History was in vogue on the Parisian stage, but not



the kind of history which appealed to readers of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. The French seemed far too keen on recycling examples of 'unchecked vice' and 'unmingled atrocity', and *Le Roi s'amuse* offered its fair share of both. The anonymous critic of the *Athenaeum*, commenting on the fatal première, noted that 'the denouement of the piece took place, I am happy to say for the credit of the French, amidst a volley of hisses. M Hugo excites emotions to a high degree, but they are those of disgust and shame.

Female spectators are driven to use their handkerchieves, but 'tis to hide crimson blushes rather than to dry up tears'. As for Act 4 (*Rigoletto's* final scene) 'it opened where? In a brothel! The

play as a whole could thus be dismissed as 'a mass of licentiousness', and when it was adapted in London the following year as *The King's Fool, or The Old Man's Curse*, 'the scenes of vice exhibited in the original' were carefully expunged.

What one early British reader of the play thought to detect in *Le Roi s'amuse* was a political subtext. Why had the government of a so-called constitutional monarchy like that of King Louis Philippe chosen to ban performances if not because of Hugo's deliberate subversiveness? The play, claimed an article in the 'Foreign Quarterly', so far from being risqué, was 'moral in the extreme', showing 'the wretchedness of buffoonery and

the misery of sinful revenge' (fascinating to consider whether Verdi and Francesco Maria Piave, at work on *Rigoletto*, would have agreed with this judgement). Hugo's real message, according to the unnamed journalist, was that 'the support of royal gaiety, magnificence, valour, generosity, patronage and noble bearing is dreadfully expensive to a people and very much interferes with good government'.

This is over-egging the pudding. Francis I, the King who goes on the razzle in Hugo's drama, is not especially noteworthy for his valour or generosity (unlike his real-life prototype). Yet the critic undoubtedly has a point. French boulevard drama, either original or based on the plots of recently successful novels, was the single most common quarry, during the early 19th century, for the librettos of Italian opera, serious or comic. The majority of Donizetti's 70-odd stage works are based on French sources, as are pieces as diverse as Verdi's *Alzira* and *La traviata* and Bellini's *La straniera*, *Norma* and *I puritani*. All sorts of factors explained this appeal, the absence of a strong vernacular drama in Italian, the constant hope of any opera composer that his work might be deemed 'parigibile', 'performable in Paris', and the presence in these plays of copperbottomed ready-made

plots out of which a capable theatre poet – like Francesco Maria Piave, for all Verdi's bullying or indeed because of it – could knock together a decent lyric drama.

What surely tickled the fancy of contemporary audiences, whether in France or Italy, was precisely that colourful and irreverent approach to historical material which had so unsettled the British critics. Hugo, though originally a fervent royalist, swiftly distanced himself from the French establishment, and when *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* was published a year after *Le Roi s'amuse*, some reviewers seized eagerly on its crypto-republicanism. 'Victor Hugo' declared one 'has no veneration for kings, or princes, or persons of noble lineage. He seems to be of the opinion that nature has dealt out her measure of good and evil in much the same proportion to all'.

Rulers of whatever rank do not fare well in Hugo's plays. Emperor Charles V in *Hernani* is probably the most engaging of them, yet even he is an ambiguous character, sardonic, lascivious and ruthless, for all his charm and show of magnanimity. Mary Tudor, in the drama of the same name, is portrayed as living in sin with an Italian musician (Hugo deliberately muddles Bloody Mary with her more glamorous

cousin the Queen of Scots) and Lucrezia Borgia, her immediate stage predecessor, fully lives up to her legendary notoriety as both incestuous and a poisoner.

Far from deterring Italian composers from bringing such figures onto the stage, Hugo's portrayal of them seems to have been a genuine incentive, since all three helped to inspire fine operas from Verdi, Pacini and Donizetti respectively. It was the operatic censors throughout Italy who felt the most alarm when any suggestion arose, as it so often did, that the librettist was going to portray a crowned head as being perhaps not quite up to the more serious aspects of his or her job. Famous in operatic annals is the ill luck dogging the dress rehearsal of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* in 1834, when the pious Maria Cristina of Naples fainted with shock during the ferocious encounter between the Scottish and English queens. In Milan and Venice the Austrian imperial censors were decidedly nervous to the theatrical portrayal of sovereign rulers, and just such an edginess was to bedevil Verdi and Piave in preparing the *Rigoletto* text.

Hugo's unsound political views were well known to the Austrians, but it was the generally gross character of the play itself which purported to disturb no less a figure than

General Gorzkowski, Military Governor of Venice. As the man who had received the city's surrender in August 1849 after its heroic year-long defiance of the Habsburg army, Gorzkowski was not a man to be trifled with. He was noted for his harshness and the scorn with which he regarded all Italians, but it comes as something of a surprise to find him stooping to intervene in the affairs of Teatro La Fenice, officially not his business anyway, but that of the Civil Governor.

Was it merely 'the repulsive immorality and obscene triviality' of *Rigoletto*, or *La Maledizione* as it was called at this stage, which so offended Gorzkowski?

Its presentation of the ruler is ostensibly not a flattering one, though the censors had done their best in scaling down Victor Hugo's King of France to a Duke of Mantua. This was a safe option in theory, since the duchy in question no longer existed, but did anyone in Venice recall that by annexing it in 1707 the Emperors of Austria had themselves become Dukes of Mantua? The fact which theatrical censorship throughout history has always found it difficult to grasp is that bad monarchs make better box office than good ones. Shakespeare's *Richard III* is a shining example, mesmerising audiences when at

his most gleefully wicked. In *Hamlet* the Prince's murdered father is always less interesting than his evil uncle, who neglects until too late to censor the play which reveals his guilt. What were they frightened of? The Italian sovereigns of 1851, several of whom had briefly toppled from their thrones in the nation-wide revolution three years earlier, were certainly not a prepossessing line-up. Venice's ruler, Emperor Franz Josef of Austria, was an aloof, charmless young fogey, King Ferdinand of Naples had earned himself the unenviable nickname 'Bomba' from having blasted his Sicilian subjects into submission, Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany, with his pot-belly and absurdly luxuriant white sidewhiskers, ruled with the aid of spies and informers, and King Victor Emmanuel of Piedmont had inherited the looks and manners of the Florentine butcher whom gossip named as his real father. As for Verdi's own sovereign, Carlo III of Parma, he was seen as little better than a playboy, dominated by his father's chief minister, the Yorkshire jockey Thomas Ward, a man of immense sagacity, a shrewd political manipulator, but hardly an appropriate pilot for a small state through the increasingly murky waters of Risorgimento Italy. None of these is clearly 'meant by' the unnamed Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*, yet Verdi and Piave had difficulty in convincing the

Venetian authorities that their tenor lead must be both an absolute ruler and an acknowledged libertine. *Rigoletto* is not susceptible to political readings, as earlier works in the Verdi canon, *I Lombardi*, *Attila* and *Ernani* were undoubtedly to be made by Italian audiences on various occasions. It is, however, a highly revolutionary work from several important artistic aspects, whether in its structure, its handling of traditional forms such as aria, cabaletta and ensemble, or the notable absence of that hitherto standard feature of Verdi opera the concerted finale, where principals and chorus express their sentiments in a climactic movement at the close of each act.

Not the least of such breaks with tradition is the presentation of the Duke. He is not the standard tenor hero, a warrior or a youthful innocent, and his love, such as it may be, is never adequately legitimized by the audience's sympathy. Simply through not being murdered by Sparafucile at the end, he occasions the drama's tragic masterstroke. The idea for 'La donna e mobile' is in Hugo's play, but it is the recurrence, at Rigoletto's moment of imagined triumph, of Verdi's little tune in all its intoxicating catchiness, which makes the hair on the back of the listener's neck stand up. The Duke becomes

memorable for us through his negative qualities. Evidently the courtiers have learned to put up with him, though the cuckolded Ceprano may yet become another Monterone. Both Gilda and, just as important dramatically in this respect, Maddalena fancy his good looks and charm. Verdi makes him not a tyrant but a heedless sensualist, touched momentarily with genuine feeling for the girl he has seduced, but ready to move on to the next in his spirit of absentminded hedonism. The opera's moral universe seems subtler, here as elsewhere, than that of *Le Roi s'amuse*, and Verdi's vision of a flawed, unthinking, instinctive humanity is in the end more compelling than its Hugolian original. For the playwright's 'grotesque greatness' the opera substitutes greatness full stop.

Jonathan Keates © 2002

The Dramatic Baritone

Chris Ball

Tito Gobbi in his *World of Italian Opera* begins the chapter devoted to *Rigoletto* thus:

'Vocally the role of Rigoletto is one of the hardest in the repertoire, requiring a tremendous amount of dramatic power to be superimposed on the tender, almost sacred feelings of a father. The music is by turns impetuous, brilliant and moving, describing in a masterly way all the contrasting emotions of a human soul.'

How much harder the title role must have seemed both to its creator, Felice Varesi (1831–1889), and the Venetian audience when the opera was first performed on 11 March 1851. Generally speaking, the press reviews were laudatory, although the critic of the *Gazetta di Venezia* perceptively dwelt upon the originality not only of the choice of subject but also of the musical style and form.

Varesi, who had created the role of Macbeth in 1847 and was to create the role of Germont in *La traviata* in 1853 was, according to his daughter, Giulia (herself a singing teacher) '...ashamed and timid in his ridiculous buffoon's costume, did not know how to pluck up courage to appear before the public for he feared their derision; and at the very last

moment, it was Verdi himself who, giving him a shove to get him on stage, made him stumble over the boards behind the scenes and flung him onto the stage, staggering all over the place. The audience thought this an inspiration for a buffoon's entry, and were enraptured...'

Varesi is regarded as the prototype dramatic baritone, marking the change from the Bellini/Donizetti repertoire to the middle and later works of Verdi, yet incredibly, given his importance in the development of the baritone voice in the history of opera, he merits no mention in the first edition of *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1889).

The increasing development and importance of the baritone voice in the second and third quarters of the 19th century did not happen overnight. Generally speaking, in the first half of the 19th century, Italian opera had a well-defined hero and heroine, sung respectively by tenor and soprano. A survey of opera plots suggests that the higher the vocal range the more likely the singer was to succeed in love. Lower voices had to content themselves with being maids, confidantes, confessors etc. with no prospect of being successful in love.

The development of the high dramatic baritone coincided broadly with that of the dramatic tenor. That is not to say that prior to 1840/1850 there were no high baritone roles. As any singer will tell you, though, there is a world of difference between singing the occasional high note and singing a role which, as a whole, lies in the upper area of the voice.

The development of the more dramatic voice coincided with heavier orchestration, larger theatres and the changes in vocal style and production leading to less use of the head voice or falsetto. Clearly it took time for the composers, the singers, the audiences and the critics to appreciate the changes which developed gradually: the innovators were really paving the way for their successors. To illustrate the point, if one listens to records made by the initial interpreters of Puccini's operas, one hears that the verismo style was entirely different from the style in which these singers had been brought up. Even allowing for the technical shortcomings of these early recordings, when they are compared with the recordings made by the next generation, the improvement and naturalness in style is self-evident. The music and style were no longer new.

Verdi and other mid-19th century composers had the distinct advantage of writing roles that suited the voice, style and personality of the singers who were available at the time. Often it was a two-way process: for example, Verdi wrote to Varesi sending him alternative settings of a phrase in *Macbeth* and asking which suited him better.

Rigoletto was an immediate success and received its first performance in England at Covent Garden on 14 May 1853 with Giorgio Ronconi (1810 - 1890) as the jester.

Donizetti had recognised Ronconi's potential when as a 23 year old in 1833 he displayed extraordinary dramatic power in *Torquato Tasso*. The incidence of important roles in Donizetti's later operas was due largely to Ronconi who did more than any singer of his day to stimulate that forceful conception of the vocal type associated with the young Verdi.

Verdi himself had no reservations about his developing style. He regarded *Rigoletto* as 'the best, the most effective subject I have so far set to music... It has very powerful situations, variety, brio, pathos'. Who better to portray this than Ronconi?

Unlike his immediate predecessor, Antonio Tamburini (1800 – 1876), although their careers did overlap, Ronconi's voice lacked smoothness and flexibility but his style was more dramatic. That most eminent Victorian critic, Henry Fothergill Chorley, was undoubtedly a Ronconi fan. Although in his *Thirty Years' Musical Recollections* Chorley found the opera *Rigoletto* 'dull, dismal and weak', he felt 'it would be impossible to exceed Signor Ronconi in the hour of his buffoonery so pliant and degraded, so superstitiously terrified beneath the curse of the old nobleman whom he is bidden to mock on the way to the scaffold, when alone with his child, showing the restless love and suspicion of an animal; after her abduction so rueful in his attempts to be gay, as he creeps to and fro among the courtiers, eye and ear alert to discover any trace of her hiding-place, convulsed with fury and vengeance when too late he finds her, and when she flings herself into his arms, hopelessly outraged!' How evocative and descriptive these words are now more than 130 years after they were written.

Chorley had the opportunity of comparison when seeing and hearing Varesi who visited London in 1864 and performed *Rigoletto* at Her Majesty's Theatre. Although, by this stage,

the role was well beyond Varesi's vocal powers, dramatically Chorley felt that the singer had much to offer.

The gifts of Varesi and Ronconi were different, yet individually they succeeded in introducing a new style and concept in baritone singing. Although Chorley was dismissive of Ronconi's purely vocal qualities, describing the voice as being 'limited in compass...so inferior in quality, so weak, so habitually out of tune' but Ronconi's genius made 'every limit, every defect, forgotten and forgiven.' Ronconi and Varesi shared this quality of genius. By their insights they paved the way for the development of the voice that we now call the Verdi baritone.

Chris Ball © 1997



Pablo Heras-Casado

Pablo Heras-Casado Conductor

Still only 32 years old, Spanish-born (Granada) Pablo Heras-Casado already enjoys a multi-faceted conducting career. Operatic engagements include world première of Marc-Olivier Dupin's ballet *Les Enfants du paradis* (debut), *Le nozze di Figaro* and Offenbach's *La Périchole* (Opéra National de Paris); Spanish première of Respighi's *La bella dormiente* (Bilbao Opera); *The Elixir of Love* (English National Opera).
Orchestral engagements include a programme of Bach, Adès and Carter with Ensemble ACJW (US debut 2008 at Carnegie Hall, New York); UK debut, 2008, with BBC Symphony and BBC Singers; BBC Philharmonic; appearances with Los Angeles Philharmonic including a Mendelssohn/Mahler programme; Tonhalle Zürich, SWR Baden-Baden Freiburg,

Staatskapelle Dresden. Pablo enjoys a regular collaboration with specialized ensembles such as Klangforum Wien and Ensemble Intercontemporain, and Freiburger Barockorchester. Future engagements include debuts with The Cleveland Orchestra at Blossom Festival, Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Seattle, Indianapolis and Houston Symphonies; appearances with Danish National Symphony Orchestra; Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France; BBC Philharmonic; Netherlands Radio (Concertgebouw); Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin; City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra; NDR Hamburg; concerts in Japan with NHK Symphony; Kurt Weill's *Mahagonny* (Teatro Real Madrid); Don Giovanni/Nozze di Figaro (Opéra National de Bordeaux); *Nixon in China* and *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Canadian Opera Company); world



James Macdonald

première of Hosokawa's *Matsukaze*, in collaboration with Sasha Waltz (La Monnaie, Staatsoper Berlin); Idomeneo (Semperoper Dresden); Peter Grimes (Zürich Opernhaus), Rigoletto (Deutsche Oper Berlin).

James Macdonald Director

Opera includes *Eugene Onegin*, *Rigoletto* (WNO); *Die Zauberflöte* (Garsington); *Wolf Club Village*, *Night Banquet* (Almeida Opera); *Oedipus Rex*, *Survivor from Warsaw* (Royal Exchange/Hallé); *Lives of the Great Poisoners* (Second Stride).
Theatre includes *Cock, Drunk Enough to Say I Love You* (also Public Theater New York), *Dying City*, *Fewer Emergencies*, *Lucky Dog*, *Blood, Blasted*, *4.48 Psychosis* [including European/US tours], *Hard Fruit*, *Real Classy Affair*, *Cleansed*, *Bailegangaire*, *Harry and Me*, *Simpatico*, *Blasted*, *Peaches*, *Thyestes*, *The Terrible Voice of Satan* (all for Royal Court); *Dido Queen of Carthage*, *The Hour We Knew*



Robert Innes Hopkins

Robert Innes Hopkins Designer

Opera includes *Xerxes* (Stockholm); *Norma* (Grange Park Opera); *Peter Grimes* (Washington National Opera); *The Rape of Lucretia* (Snape Maltings); *Billy Budd* (Santa Fe Opera); *Carmen* (Bolshoi); *Lohengrin* (Geneva Opera); *Rigoletto* (Lyric Opera, Chicago); *Betrothal in a Monastery* (Glyndebourne); *Die Soldaten* (Ruhr Triennale/Lincoln Center Festival). Recent theatre includes *Bingo* (Chichester); *Dunsinane* for the RSC at Hampstead Theatre; *The Priory*, *Tusk Tusk* and *The Pain and the Itch* (Royal Court); *Marble* (Abbey, Dublin); *Dallas Sweetman* (Canterbury Cathedral); *Romeo & Juliet*, *Twelfth Night* (Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park); *The Member of the Wedding* (Young Vic); *Our Country's Good* (Liverpool Playhouse); *Carousel*, *Wallenstein* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Macbeth*, *A*



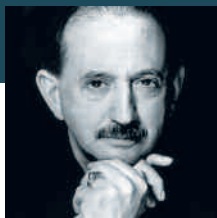
Simon Mills

Servant to Two Masters, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Malcontent* (RSC/West End) Awards include Opernwelt Set Designer of the Year 2007 for *Die Soldaten*.

Simon Mills Lighting Designer

Simon Mills' previous work for WNO includes *The Return of Ulysses* (also Copenhagen and Munich) and *The Elixir of Love* (also Opera North). Current work includes *L'elisir d'amore* (Opera de Oviedo); *The Bartered Bride* (Palau de les Arts, Valencia). Other engagements include *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Hello Dolly* (New Shakespeare Company at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (Trafalgar Studios); *Rigoletto* (Grange Park Opera); *Lohengrin* (revival) (Houston Grand Opera); *Lohengrin* (Geneva); *Don Giovanni* (Exvinograd, Varna 2007, Bulgaria); *Macbeth* (Malmo Opera); *The Merry Widow* (Scottish Opera

Nothing of Each Other, *Exiles* (National Theatre); *The Book of Grace* (Public Theater); *Top Girls* (Broadway/MTC); *Glengarry Glen Ross* (West End); *Dying City* (Lincoln Center); *A Number* (New York Theatre Workshop); *Troilus und Cressida*, *Die Kopien* (Berlin Schaubühne); *4.48 Psychosis* (Vienna Burgtheater); *The Tempest*, *Roberto Zucco* (RSC); *Judgment Day*, *The Triumph of Love* (Almeida); *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Richard II* (Royal Exchange, Manchester); *The Rivals* (Nottingham Playhouse); *The Crackwalker* (Gate); *The Seagull* (Sheffield Crucible); *Miss Julie* (Oldham Coliseum); *Juno and the Paycock*, *Ice Cream and Hot Fudge*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Fool for Love*, *Savage/Love*, *Master Harold and the Boys* (Contact Theatre); *Prem* (BAC/Soho Poly). Film includes *A Number* (HBO/BBC). James was Associate Director of the Royal Court from 1992 to 2006 and a NESTA fellow 2003 to 2006.



Stuart Hopps

Go Round); *Twelfth Night / Romeo & Juliet* and *Gigi* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Cinderella* and *Black Eyed Susan* (Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds); *The Dumb Waiter* (Trafalgar Studios, London); *Carmen* (Companions Opera, Hamburg, Zurich, Shanghai, Gelsenkirchen); *Faust* Parts 1 and 2 (Royal Lyceum Edinburgh); *Les Mamelles de Tiresias* and *L'Heure Espagnole* (Guildhall School of Music); *Das Rheingold* (English National Opera); *The Handmaid's Tale* (Copenhagen; ENO; Toronto); *Manon Lescaut* (Opera North; Norway; Oviedo); *The Bartered Bride* (Opera North; Opera du Rhin); *Cunning Little Vixen* (Bregenz Festival 2003; San Francisco 2004; Geneva 2005). Future plans include *Rigoletto* (Grange Park Opera).

Stuart Hopps Choreographer

Stuart Hopps has a BA in Romance Languages from London University, and an MFA from Sarah

Lawrence College, New York where he studied dance composition with Bessie Schonberg. In 2008 Stuart received an Honorary Doctorate of Arts for services to choreography from City University. Associate Director of the Scottish Ballet (1971–76), where ballets included *Sleepers* and *An Clo Mor*. Engagements as director include a revival of *Idomeneo* for WNO; *The Fairy-Queen* for the City of London Festival; *Il maestro di cappella*, *Susanna's Secret* and *The Telephone* for Buxton Opera Festival; and *The Merry Widow* for Norwegian National Opera. He has worked as Choreographer and Movement Director for *Die Fledermaus* and *Eugene Onegin* with WNO; *The Silver Tassie*, *The Italian Girl in Algiers*, *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *The Queen Of Spades* for ENO; *The Cunning Little Vixen* and *Carmen* for ROH; *Carmen* in Barcelona, for Washington Opera and Los Angeles Opera; *Cornet Rilke's Song of Love and Death*



Neda Bizzarri

for Glyndebourne; *I due Foscari* and *Die Fledermaus* with Scottish Opera. Film credits include *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Hamlet*, *Love's Labours Lost*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Carrington*, *Imagining Argentina*, *A Knight's Tale* and Kenneth Branagh's *The Magic Flute*.

Neda Bizzarri Giovanna

Neda Bizzarri was born in Melbourne, Australia and studied music at The University of Melbourne and The Victorian College of the Arts. Roles at college included Linetta *The Love for Three Oranges*, Zita *Gianni Schicchi* and Mistress of the Novices *Suor Angelica*. She performed in the chorus of The Victoria State Opera and Opera Australia as well as performing the roles of Cherubino *Le nozze di Figaro* and Dorabella *Così fan tutte* for Eastern Metropolitan Opera in Melbourne before landing on UK soil. Studying under Marion Studholme, she performed title role



Sarah Coburn

Carmen, 3rd Lady *The Magic Flute*, Maddalena *Rigoletto* and Daisy *Ten Bells* and covered Popova *The Bear* for companies throughout London. Whilst working at Reuters in one of their technical departments, Neda successfully auditioned for the WNO Chorus in 2004 where roles include Cloclo *The Merry Widow*, Mother *Madam Butterfly* and Governess *The Queen of Spades*, and covers include Bridesmaid *The Marriage of Figaro*, Inez *Il trovatore* and Kate Pinkerton *Madam Butterfly* which she went on to perform.

Sarah Coburn **Gilda**

American soprano Sarah Coburn holds a Master of Music degree from Oklahoma City University and a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Oklahoma State University. She has received awards from the Richard Tucker Foundation, the George London Foundation, The Jensen Foundation, Liederkrantz Foundation,

Opera Index, and was a National Finalist in the 2001 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

Upcoming engagements include Amina *La Sonnambula* (Wiener Staatsoper); Gilda *Rigoletto* (Los Angeles Opera, L'Opéra de Montréal and Cincinnati Opera); Rosina *Il barbière di Siviglia* (Seattle Opera); Handel's *L'Allegro* with Mark Morris Dance Group and Los Angeles Opera Orchestra.

Recent engagements include Rosina *Il barbière di Siviglia* and Asteria *Tamerlano* (Los Angeles Opera); Rosina (Florida Grand Opera); title role *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Tulsa Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Glimmerglass Opera and Utah Opera); Vittoria *Tutti in maschera* (Wexford Festival Opera); Euridice *L'amina del filosofo* (Handel and Haydn Society and Glimmerglass Opera); Gilda (Portland Opera); Asteria *Tamerlano* (Washington National Opera); Princess Yue-Yang *The First Emperor* (Metropolitan Opera);

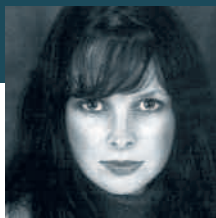


Michael Druiett

Elvira *I puritani*, Amenaide *Tancredi* (Washington Concert Opera); Olympia *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Oscar *Un ballo in maschera* (Cincinnati Opera); Giulietta *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* (Glimmerglass Opera); Adele *Die Fledermaus* (Seattle Opera); Kitty in world première of *Anna Karenina* (Florida Grand Opera and Opera Theater of St Louis); Norina *Don Pasquale* and Oscar (Florida Grand Opera).

Michael Druiett **Monterone**

Michael Druiett studied at the Royal College of Music Opera School and National Opera Studio. During his early career, he was a member of English National Opera and Royal Opera House as a principal bass, and guest artist with many other companies including Glyndebourne, Scottish Opera, Opera National de Montpellier, La Monnaie, Opéra de Lyon, New Israeli Opera, Opéra National de Paris. He has recently moved



Claire Hampton

into the dramatic and Heldenbariton repertory beginning with Donner *Der Ring des Nibelungen* conducted by Richard Armstrong and Monterone *Rigoletto* (Scottish Opera). This process reached a significant landmark when he sang Prince Ivan Khovansky *Khovanshchina* and Jockanaan *Salome* for WNO. Other recent engagements include Sharpless *Madame Butterfly* in Robert Carson's production, Baron Douphol *La traviata* (Opéra National de Paris); The Bonze *Madam Butterfly* (WNO); title role *Boris Godunov* (ENO). Michael also enjoys a busy concert career, including performances of *Elijah*, Beethoven *No 9*, Brahms *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, Berlioz *La damnation de Faust*, *L'Enfance du Christ*, *St Matthew Passion*, Fauré *Requiem* and Mahler *No 8* with orchestras in UK and Europe. Recordings include *Salome* with Sir Charles Mackerras and the Philharmonia and *Die*

Meistersinger von Nürnberg with Bernard Haitink and the Royal Opera. Future engagements include returning to the Opéra National de Paris; Micha *Bartered Bride*, Monterone (ROH).

Claire Hampton Countess Ceprano

Claire Hampton was born in Staffordshire. Her training began in 1992 when she was offered a place at Royal Northern College of Music. Whilst at the college, Claire won both the Elsie Thurston Memorial Prize and the Alexander Young Prize. Her studies were then further extended to Postgraduate level with the generous support of the Peter Moores Foundation Scholarship. This also enabled her to attend intensive language and opera studies in Florence. Since graduating, Claire has performed extensively as a concert recitalist throughout the UK and appeared with Floral Opera in the roles of Dorinda *Orlando* and Susanna *The Marriage*



Gwyn Hughes Jones

of Figaro. She joined the Chorus of WNO in August 2002 where roles have included Plaintiff *Trial by Jury* for WNO's Chorus Tour of Wales, Jana *Jenůfa* (a role that she recorded with WNO/Mackerras for Chandos in July 2003), Squire *Parsifal*, Echo *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Papagena *The Magic Flute* and Comtesse D'Arenberg *Don Carlos*.

Gwyn Hughes Jones The Duke

Gwyn Hughes Jones hails from Llanbedrgoch, Anglesey. He made his professional operatic debut in 1995 with Welsh National Opera as Ismaele *Nabucco* conducted by Carlo Rizzi. Other roles for WNO include Duke *Rigoletto*, Rodolfo *La bohème*, Nemorino *The Elixir of Love*, title role in Gounod's *Faust*, Pinkerton *Madam Butterfly*, Don José *Carmen*. Other UK roles include Pinkerton, Macduff *Macbeth* (ROH); Lensky *Eugene Onegin*, Rinuccio *Gianni Schicchi*,



Leah-Marian Jones

Rodolfo, Pinkerton (ENO). Roles abroad include Ismaele, Camille de Rossillon *The Merry Widow* (Opéra National de Paris); title role *Werther* (Opéra National de Lyon); Fenton *Falstaff* (La Monnaie); Rodolfo, Don José (Norwegian National Opera); Don José (Music Theatre Trondheim); Pinkerton (Festival Lirico Internacional de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Spain); Fenton, Pinkerton, Rodolfo (Lyric Opera of Chicago); Rodolfo, Ismaele (San Francisco Opera); Ismaele, Fenton, (Metropolitan Opera); Ernesto *Don Pasquale* (Florida Grand Opera); Rodolfo (Santa Fe Opera); Cavaradossi *Tosca* (LA Opera). Extensive concert repertoire includes Verdi's *Requiem* and Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* and he has appeared with many orchestras worldwide. He is also an accomplished recitalist. Recent highlights include Don José (Norwegian National Opera); Rodolfo (WNO);

Calaf *Turandot* (ENO); recital at Musashino Civic Cultural Hall, Tokyo; opera galas at the Barbican, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and Waterfront Hall, Belfast. Future plans include Manrico *Il trovatore*, Calaf (WNO); Cavaradossi under the baton of Plácido Domingo (Washington Opera).

Leah-Marian Jones Maddalena

Leah-Marian Jones was born in Wales and is a graduate of the Royal Northern College of Music and National Opera Studio. She was a Company Principal at Royal Opera House for eight years, singing numerous roles including Tisbe *La Cenerentola*, Varvara *Katya Kabanova*, Dorabella *Così fan tutte*, Karolka *Jenůfa*, Maddalena, Second Lady *Die Zauberflöte*, Mercédès *Carmen*, Rosette *Manon*, Zulma *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Bersi *Andrea Chenier*, Bianca / Gabriella *La rondine*, Dorothea *Stiffelio*, Flora *La traviata*, Emilia

Otello, Fenena *Nabucco*, Fedora *Elisabetta*, Laura *Luisa Miller*, Annina *Der Rosenkavalier*, Flosshilde *Das Rheingold* / *Götterdämmerung*, Second Esquire / Third Flower Maiden *Parsifal*, young doctor *Palestrina* (also performed at Metropolitan Opera), Poppet / Goose 2 *Paul Bunyan*, Polia *The Enchantress*. Other engagements include title role *Carmen*, Maddalena, Orestes *La belle Helene*, Sonyetka *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, Rossweisse *Valkyrie*, Hippolyta *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (ENO); Meg Page *Falstaff*, Dorabella, Hansel *Hansel and Gretel*, Annina, Bersi, Page *Salome*, Rossweisse / Flosshilde / Norn *The Ring* (Scottish Opera); Lola *Cavalleria rusticana*, Maddalena (WNO); Frederica *Luisa Miller* (Chelsea Opera); *Carmen* *La tragedie de Carmen* (ETO); Maddalena / Giovanna *Rigoletto* (Opera North); Junon *Platée* (Berkeley, San Francisco); Flosshilde (Chatelet,



Simon Keenlyside

Paris); Polly Peachum *The Beggars Opera* (ROH Linbury Studio); Annina (ROH); Flosshilde (in concert) with the Hallé; Zaida *Il turco in Italia* (ROH). Future plans include Marcellina *Le nozze di Figaro* (Scottish Opera); Meg Page (Angers Nantes Opéra and Opéra de Rennes).

Simon Keenlyside Rigoletto

Simon Keenlyside made his operatic debut as Count Almaviva *Le nozze di Figaro* (Hamburg State Opera). He has since sung in Geneva (Hamlet, Pélleas, Papageno, Oreste); Barcelona (Don Giovanni and Hamlet); Madrid (Posa, Pelléas); San Francisco (Pélleas, Olivier *Capriccio*); Brussels (Orfeo); Paris (Papageno *The Magic Flute*, Pélleas, Guglielmo *Così fan tutte*, Yeletsky *The Queen of Spades*, Dandini *La Cenerentola*, Wozzeck); Vienna (Macbeth, Giorgio Germont, Eugene Onegin, Figaro *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Marcello *La bohème*, Count Almaviva, Billy Budd, Don Giovanni, Papageno, Posa); Munich (Giorgio Germont, Marcello, Count Almaviva, Ford, Wolfram *Tannhäuser*); Tokyo (Don Giovanni with La Monnaie, Wolfram with Bayerische Staatsoper and Count Almaviva with Vienna State Opera); Metropolitan Opera (Hamlet, Marcello, Papageno, Count Almaviva, Belcore, Olivier *Capriccio*); Salzburg (Guglielmo, Papageno, Pélleas); La Scala Milan (Papageno, Count Almaviva, Belcore); Royal Opera House (Billy Budd, Count Almaviva, Ford, Don Giovanni, Valentin, Pélleas, Posa, Belcore, Marcello, Guglielmo, Papageno, Hamlet, Prospero *The Tempest*). His previous roles for WNO include Oreste *Iphégenie en Tauride*, Dr Falke *Die Fledermaus* and Figaro *The Barber of Seville*. He won the 2006 Olivier Award for outstanding achievement in opera for *Billy Budd* (ENO) and *1984* (ROH). In



Martin Lloyd

2007 he was given the ECHO Klassik award for Male Singer of the Year. He was made a CBE in 2003. Future plans include Posa, Renato, Rigoletto and Wozzeck (Vienna State Opera); Posa (Metropolitan Opera); Germont Père, Macbeth and Count Almaviva (ROH).

Martin Lloyd Count Ceprano

Martin Lloyd comes from Swansea and is a graduate of Aberystwyth University and McMaster University in Canada. He joined WNO in August 2006 where roles include 2nd Streltsy *Khovanshchina*, 2nd Armed Man *The Magic Flute*, Officer *The Barber of Seville*, Second Soldier *Salome*, Dr Grenvil *La traviata* and Imperial Commissioner *Madam Butterfly*. He has worked previously with various touring companies. Roles include Sarastro *The Magic Flute*, Seneca *The Coronation of Poppea*, Colline *La bohème* and Zuniga



Alastair Moore

Carmen. He has also performed throughout the country as a concert and oratorio soloist. Oratorio works performed recently include Handel's *Messiah*, Haydn's *Creation* and Puccini's *Messa di Gloria*. He has appeared in several television broadcasts for S4C and has enjoyed considerable success in competition, including the Blue Ribbon Prize at the Welsh National Eisteddfod in 2004.

Alastair Moore Marullo

Alastair trained at Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Tutors have included Ian Kennedy, Beatrice Unsworth, Terence Sharpe and Marilyn Rees. He has won many awards including Welsh Livery Guild Arts Award, Sir Geraint Evans singing scholarship, and first prize in John Ireland Trust singing competition. Appearances include Extra Chorus *Rigoletto*, *La rondine* (Royal Opera House); roles: Second



Laura Pooley

Guest *Osud*, cover of Masetto *Don Giovanni* (Garsington Opera); Dr Grenvil *La traviata* (English Touring Opera); Tom *Un ballo in maschera*, Krusina *The Bartered Bride* (Burry Port Opera); Wagner *Faust*, Dr Grenvil *La traviata* (Cadoxton Opera); Chorus *Turandot*, *Tosca*, *Aida*, *The Magic Flute* (Mid-Wales Opera). Alastair is a member of WNO's Chorus where roles include Imperial Commissioner *Madam Butterfly*, Kuligin *Katya Kabanova*, Lackey *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Marullo *Rigoletto*, Orlik *Mazepa*, Alcindoro *La bohème*, Varsonofev *Khovanshchina*, Prince Yamadori *Madam Butterfly*, Mayor *Jenůfa*, First Soldier *Salome*.

Laura Pooley Page

Laura studied Classics and English at St John's College, Oxford, where she was awarded the Passmore Edwards Prize. After teaching Latin she studied singing at Trinity College of Music and the Royal College of

Music. For WNO Laura has appeared as Masha *The Queen of Spades*, First Bridesmaid *The Marriage of Figaro*, a soloist in the *Messiah* at St David's Hall and Frou Frou *The Merry Widow*. She is a committed soloist for WNO Creative and WNO MAX, for whom she has recently performed the new commission *A Real Princess* in venues across England and Wales. Opera roles elsewhere include Lucia *The Rape of Lucretia*, Drusilla *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Nora *Riders to the Sea*, Micaela *Carmen*, Woodpecker / Hen / Creature *Cunning Little Vixen*. Laura also performs regularly as a concert soloist in Europe and the UK. She has studied with Laura Sarti since 2007, including master classes in Sion, Paris and Lund.



Cárthaigh Quill

Cárthaigh Quill Borsa

Born in Dublin, Ireland, Cárthaigh studied under Emmanuel Lawler at Dublin's DIT Conservatory of Music. He then moved to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama where he studied with Eric Roberts and Angela Livingstone. Upon completing his studies at RWCMD Cárthaigh was awarded a place at the National Opera Studio.

Roles include Monostatos *The Magic Flute*, The Mayor (Cover) *Albert Herring* with BYO; Rinuccio *Gianni Schicchi* and Mozart in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Mozart and Salieri* for Northern Ireland Opera Fringe; Rodolfo *La bohème* for the inaugural Glasthule Festival Opera in Dublin; Spoleta *Tosca* for WNO.

As a concert performer Cárthaigh has sung all over Wales and also in Italy, Switzerland, America, England and Ireland and has appeared on radio and television singing solo work.



David Soar

Cárthaigh has won many prizes including the O'Mara Cup for male voice at The Siemens Feis Ceoil and the Sir Geraint Evans bursary at RWCMD. Cárthaigh enjoys the support of Chris Ball, The Irish Arts Council and The Musicians Benevolent Fund.

David Soar Sparafucile

David studied organ and singing at Royal Academy of Music. After working as a freelance organist, singer and conductor, he joined the Chorus of WNO, where roles included Captain / Zaretsky *Eugene Onegin*, Doctor Grenvil *La traviata*, Bertrand *Iolanta*, Sarastro *The Magic Flute*. After studying at the National Opera Studio David returned to WNO where he is currently an Associate Artist supported by the Chris Ball bursary and first recipient of the Parry Family Bursary. Roles for WNO include Colline *La bohème*, Zuniga / Escamillo *Carmen*, Bonze *Madam*

Butterfly, Brander *The Damnation of Faust*, Bass *The Seven Deadly Sins*, Ferrando *Il trovatore*, Alidoro *La Cenerentola*, The King *Aida*, Lodovico *Otello*, Surin *The Queen of Spades*, title role *The Marriage of Figaro*, Doctor Grenvil, First Apprentice / Doctor *Wozzeck*. David also sings *Nightwatchman Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* this season. Roles elsewhere include Banquo *Macbeth*, Zaccaria *Nabucco*, Alvisé Badoero *La Gioconda* (Opera Holland Park); Donner *Das Rheingold* (Lucerne Festival); Alfonso d'Este *Lucrezia Borgia* (Buxton Festival).

Concert repertoire includes Handel's *Messiah*, *Creation*, *Elijah*; Mozart's and Brahms' *Requiem*; Beethoven's *Symphony No 9* and *Missa Solemnis*; Verdi's *Requiem*; Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* and *The Apostles*; Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle*; Stanford's *Songs of the Fleet*; Bach's *Mass in B minor*, *St John Passion*, *St*



Stephen Wells

Matthew Passion, *Christmas Oratorio* and numerous cantatas including *Ich habe genug* for solo bass. Future plans include his ROH debut as Quinault *Adriana Lecouvreur* and Le Duc *Romeo and Juliette* (Salzburg Festival).

Stephen Wells Usher

Stephen Wells received his musical training in Wellington, New Zealand and at the RNCM in Manchester where he was recipient of the Brigitte Fassbaender Lieder Prize. He studied singing with Neil Howlett, Patrick McGuigan and Enid Hartle, and has worked on roles and repertoire with Sergei Leiferkus and Andreas Scholl. He has sung with Wellington City Opera, Opera 74, Lakeland Opera, Bel Canto Opera, Claxton Opera, Guildford Opera, Opera Holland Park, Opera Les Azurieles, Onafhankelijke Toneel (Netherlands), Scottish Ballet and Opera North. Operatic roles include Count *Le nozze di*

Figaro, Guglielmo *Così fan tutte*, Speaker *Die Zauberflöte*, Smirnov *The Bear*, Plunkett *Martha*, Eugene *Onegin*, Musiklehrer *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Dulcamara *The Elixir of Love*, Riccardo *The Night Bell*, Danilo *The Merry Widow*, Sid *La fanciulla del West*, Mandryka *Arabella* and Malatesta *Don Pasquale* (both covered for Garsington Opera). He has also performed and recorded frequently with the BBC Singers, BBC Daily Service, Geoffrey Mitchell Choir and Manchester Cathedral Choir. He has appeared as a soloist with numerous choirs and choral societies in the UK in works including Monteverdi's *Vespers*, the Bach *Passions*, *Messiah*, *Jephtha*, *Theodora*, *Carmina Burana*, *The Apostles*, *Sea Drift* and the *War Requiem*. Stephen joined the Chorus of WNO in June 2009.

Orchestra of WELSH NATIONAL OPERA

Leader David Adams

First Violin

David Adams /
Lowri Porter (Assistant
leader for this production)
Emily Davies
Martin Kegelmann
Robert Tonkin
Susan Plessner
Jane Atkinson
Peter Lilley
Mathias Maurer
Emma Menzies
Rebecca Matthews
Emily Godden
Lauren Abbott

Second Violin

Donald McNaught
Ann Jones
Gillian Bradley
Luke Roskams
Marilyn Shewring
Antony Tarlton
Jane West
Deborah Neath
James Slater

Viola

Philip Heyman
Cédric David
Barry Friend
Stephen Lloyd
Louise Brodrick
Audrey Barr
Domini Lipman
Ross Cohen

Cello

Alexandra Mackenzie
Christopher Hodges
Arthur Davies
Simon Davison
Alexandra Robinson
Dewi Watkins

Double Bass

David Peller
Mikeal Price
Mary Condliffe
Simon Phillips

Flute

Jonathan Burgess
Nicola Dowton

Piccolo

Nicola Dowton

Oboe

Sasha Calin
David Probert

Cor Anglais

David Probert

Clarinet

Leslie Craven
Daniel Rye

Bassoon

Stephen Marsden
Christopher Vale

Horn

Neil Mitchell
Donald Clist
David Shillaw
James Mildred

Trumpet

Dean Wright
Martin McHale

Trombone

Roger Cutts
John Hendy

Bass Trombone

Alan Swain

Cimbasso

Daniel Trodden

Timpani

Patrick King

Percussion

Philip Girling
Jonathan Helm /
Andrew Cookson

Stage Band

Piccolo

Luke Russell

Clarinet

Peter Fielding

E♭ Clarinet

Hannah Morgan

Horn

Angus West
Jenny Cox
James Mildred

Trumpet

Robert Johnston

Trombone

Johanna Hirst

Percussion

Jonathan Helm /
Andrew Cookson

Chorus of WELSH NATIONAL OPERA

Chorus Master Stephen Harris

Sopranos

Meriel Andrew
Anitra Blaxhall
Paula Bradbury
Megan Llewellyn Dorke
Claire Hampton
Fiona Harrison
Rosie Hay
Samantha Hay
Emma Mary Llewellyn
Laura Pooley

Tenors

Simon Crosby Buttle
Michael Clifton-Thompson
Simon Curtis
Paul Gyton
Philip Lloyd Holtam
Howard Kirk
Huw Llywelyn
Gareth Lloyd
Philip Pooley
Cárthaigh Quill

Mezzos

Amanda Baldwin
Neda Bizzarri
Jessica Handley Greaves
Helen Greenaway
Dorothy Hood
Sian Meinir
Nicola Morgan
Sarah Pope

Basses

Julian Boyce
Laurence Cole
Jasey Hall
Martin Lloyd
Philip Lloyd-Evans
Alastair Moore
George Newton-Fitzgerald
Jack O'Kelly
James Robinson-May
Stephen Wells