

Giuseppe Verdi

RIGOLETTO

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For this production, the action has been updated to 1960 Las Vegas.

ACT I

At his casino, the Duke boasts of his way with women. He dances with the Countess Ceprano, while Rigoletto, the Duke's hunchbacked sidekick and sometime comedian, mocks the countess's enraged but helpless husband, Count Ceprano. Marullo, one of the Duke's entourage, bursts in with the latest gossip: Rigoletto is suspected of keeping a young mistress at his place. Rigoletto, unaware of the news, continues to taunt Ceprano, who plots with the others to punish him. Monterone, an Arab tycoon, forces his way into the crowd to denounce the Duke for seducing his daughter and is viciously ridiculed by Rigoletto. Monterone is arrested and curses Rigoletto.

Rigoletto is disturbed by Monterone's curse. He encounters Sparafucile, a hitman, who offers his services. Rigoletto reflects that his own tongue is as sharp as the murderer's knife. Arriving at home he warmly greets his daughter, Gilda. Afraid for the girl's safety, he warns the housekeeper, Giovanna, not to let anyone into the apartment. When Rigoletto leaves, the Duke appears and bribes Giovanna, who lets him in. He declares his love for Gilda, who has secretly admired him at church, and tells her he is a poor student. After he has left, Gilda tenderly thinks of her newfound love before going to bed. The Duke's entourage gathers, intending to abduct Rigoletto's "mistress." Rigoletto appears and they quickly change their story, telling him they are abducting the Countess Ceprano, and enlist his aid in their scheme. But they have deceived him and it is Gilda they carry off, with Rigoletto's unwitting assistance. He rushes in to discover that his daughter is gone and collapses as he remembers Monterone's curse.

ACT II

At the casino, the Duke is distraught about the abduction of Gilda. When his entourage returns and tells him the story of how they took the girl from Rigoletto's apartment and left her in the Duke's rooms, her hurries off to her. Rigoletto enters, looking for Gilda. The entourage is astonished to find out that she is his daughter rather than his mistress, but they prevent him from storming into the Duke's apartment. Rigoletto violently denounces them for their cruelty, then asks for compassion. Gilda appears and runs in shame to her father, who orders the others to leave. Alone with Rigoletto, Gilda tells him of the Duke's courtship, of her abduction, and her seduction by the Duke. Monterone is brought in as he is being taken away by the Duke's men, and Rigoletto swears that both he and the old man will be avenged. Gilda begs her father to forgive the Duke.

ACT III

Rigoletto and Gilda arrive at a seedy club on the outskirts of town where Sparafucile and his sister Maddalena live. Inside, the Duke laughs at the fickleness of women. Gilda and Rigoletto watch through the window as the Duke amuses himself with Maddalena. Rigoletto tells Gilda to leave town disguised as a man and pays Sparafucile to murder the Duke. Gilda returns to overhear Maddalena urge her brother to spare the handsome stranger and kill the hunchback instead. Sparafucile refuses to murder Rigoletto but agrees to kill the next person who arrives at the club, so that he will be able to produce a dead body. Gilda decides to sacrifice herself for the Duke. She knocks, enters the club, and is stabbed. Rigoletto returns and Sparafucile presents him with the body, which is wrapped in a trenchcoat with its face covered. Assuming it is the Duke's, Rigoletto gloats over the body, when he hears his supposed victim singing in the distance. Frantically pulling the covering aside, he finds his daughter, who dies asking his forgiveness. Horrified, Rigoletto remembers Monterone's curse.

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