

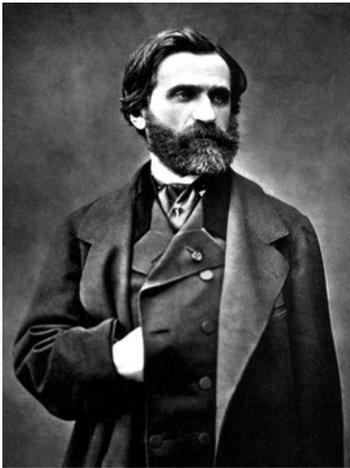
PALM BEACH OPERA

Cheat Sheet: Rigoletto

“ The one where the hunchback jester hires a hit man to murder his boss but finds the resulting corpse is not his boss but his daughter. ”

— Sir Denis Forman, *A Night at the Opera*

Who wrote the music?



Giuseppe Verdi was born October 10th, 1813 in Italy. His talents were undeniable, so much so that his town passed the collection plate to send him to Milan to further his musical studies (think early Kickstarter campaign). At the ripe old age of 20, Verdi became the conductor at the Philharmonic in Busseto, Italy, where he met his wife Margherita. Verdi's marriage could be the plot for a tragic opera. They lost two children and Margherita died just four years after they tied the knot.

Verdi hit his operatic stride in 1842 when he composed his first mega hit *Nabucco* which ushered in an age of awesome operas. He gave the world *Ernani*, *Macbeth*, *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Don Carlos*, *Otello*, *Falstaff*, and of course *Rigoletto*.

Everybody loved Verdi. When he died, 250,000 people lined the streets to view his funeral procession and pay their respects to a man that would go down in history as one of the greatest opera composers to ever grace the Earth.

Who's in the story?

There are several important people in the story, but you'll want to watch out for:

- * **Rigoletto**, a hunchback jester
- * **Gilda**, Rigoletto's sweet and innocent daughter
- * **The Duke of Mantua**, Gilda's love interest
- * **Sparafucile**, an assassin
- * **Maddalena**, Sparafucile's sultry sister

What happens in a nutshell...

ACT I Scene 1:

The Duke talks about a pretty girl from church that he has his eye on. Despite all the church-going, the Duke is an unapologetic womanizer and likes to seduce women from his court. Rigoletto mocks Monterone who is angry that the Duke has seduced his beloved daughter. Rigoletto mocks a lot of the men at court and they do not like it one bit. Monterone curses Rigoletto for mocking him.

ACT I Scene 2:

Sparafucile offers to assassinate the Duke on behalf of Rigoletto. Rigoletto declines and heads home to take care of his loving and naive daughter Gilda (who he keeps locked away from the Duke). But he does let her go to church... where she ultimately meets a boy named Gualtier Maldè...who is really the Duke in disguise...

Meanwhile, the men from court who don't like to be mocked have decided they are going to kidnap Rigoletto's lover. But Rigoletto doesn't have a lover; he does, however, have a daughter that the men mistake for his lover. They kidnap Gilda and bring her to the Duke.

ACT II:

Gilda and the Duke have adult relations. Rigoletto finds out. Not good.

ACT III: SPOILER ALERT

Rigoletto tells Gilda that the Duke cannot be faithful. To prove it, Rigoletto takes Gilda to a house where the Duke is currently seducing Maddalena, Sparafucile's sister. Gilda is crushed. Rigoletto hires Sparafucile to kill the Duke, but Maddalena begs Sparafucile to spare the Duke. Sparafucile agrees to kill someone else, and that someone else turns out to be Gilda who has returned to the house to reconcile with the Duke. Rigoletto is crushed and cries out in Italian, "La maledizione!" (which means, 'the curse!' in English).

"La maledizione!"



What am I going to hear?

First of all, you are going to hear the beautiful music Verdi is known for and beautiful singing that Palm Beach Opera is known for. Not only that, we bet money you are going to know some of the music from Verdi's *Rigoletto*.

Music from *Rigoletto* has been heard in episodes of *Star Trek*, *The Magicians*, *Futurama* and *Boardwalk Empire*, and have been featured in the films *Quartet*, *Wallstreet*, *Madagascar 3* and *A Prairie Home Companion*, to name a few. All that is to say, we think the tunes have found their way into your ears at some point in your lifetime.

Here are just a few of *Rigoletto's* Greatest Hits:

Questa o quella

The opening number of the opera, when the Duke says, "**This girl or that one**, they're all the same to me." This tells you all that you really need to know about the Duke.

Caro nome

This happens at the end of Act I when Gilda, in love with a boy from church, meditates on his **dearest name...** Gualtier Maldè...a.k.a. the Duke in disguise.

Cortigiani, vil razza dannata

Rigoletto's Act II aria where he curses the men who have kidnapped his daughter Gilda. He is really angry here, this jester is not jokin'!

La donna è mobile

You've definitely heard this one before! The Duke sings this at the beginning of ACT III when he decides to seduce Maddalena. This tune is so great that Verdi repeats this theme a few times after we hear the Duke sing it.

Bella figlia dell'amore

This wonderfully famous quartet is found in ACT III and is jam packed with musical deliciousness. *Rigoletto* tries to convince Gilda that the Duke is awful; Gilda is upset about how awful the Duke is; Maddalena wants to be awful with the Duke; and the Duke is just plain awful.



Sketches of the Duke's costumes from the premiere production of *Rigoletto*.

Men wore tights a lot back in the day...
...and we don't hate it.