

EDMONTON VERDI FESTIVAL 2013

VERDI AND SPOKEN WORD

Created, Produced and Directed by Adriana A. Davies

September 18th, 2013, 12 noon and 7 pm, Edmonton City Hall

PROGRAM

Part 1: The Hidden Verdi: Lovers and Daughters

On October 10th, 2013 the world will celebrate the 200th anniversary of the romantic Italian composer Giuseppe (Fortunino Francesco) Verdi's birth (10 October 1813 - 27 January 1901). Like Shakespeare, Verdi has captured the imaginations and hearts of audiences from his own day to the present. His works touch on the basic human themes of birth, death, love, power, sexuality, greed and fortune. These are conveyed through richly-developed characters and dramatic music. From the performance of his third opera *Nabucco* (March 1842), Verdi went from success to success, and was embraced by the people of Italy not only as a great composer but also as a representative of the Risorgimento, the rebirth of what became a unified Italy.

In *Nabucco*, Italian opera-goers easily identified the "Va pensiero" chorus of the Hebrew slaves as a lament of the downtrodden Italian people against the yoke of an imperial power. To those who wanted Italian independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the slogan "Viva Verdi" not only celebrated the composer's achievements but also became an acronym for "Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia" - a cry for the return of the king of Italy.

In his lifetime, his works became part of the international opera repertoire. And what incredible works they are - from *Oberto* (1839), to *Nabucco* (1842), to *Macbeth* (1847), to *Rigoletto* (1851), to *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata* (1853), to *Un Ballo in Maschera* (1859), to *La Forza del Destino* (1861; performed in 1862), and *Aida* (1871), to name his "mega-operas." The following performance is a tribute to Verdi and a critical look at his life and work using the vehicle of music and spoken word, both text and prose.

Romantic Love: Delizio [Delight]

No-one in his time would have failed to see the connection between Verdi's great opera *La Traviata* and his personal life. Translated as the "woman who has strayed," the opera's central character was seen by contemporaries as a not-so-subtle reference to Clelia Maria Josepha (Giuseppina) Strepponi (September 8, 1815 – November 14, 1897), his mistress after the death of his young wife Margherita in June, 1840. The pivotal aria in *La Traviata* is the duet when Alfredo and Violetta meet and she celebrates a life of pleasure and he a great love that is the heartbeat of the universe. Alfredo sings of their happy life together in the countryside in "De' miei bollenti spiriti." ["My ebullient spirits"].

Introduction

Adriana Davies

Giuseppe Verdi

La Traviata "Un dì felice," duet

Denice Bennett, Ron Long

		Accompanist: Stephanie Kwan
Giuseppe Verdi	<i>La Traviata</i> “De’ miei bollenti spiriti”	Ron Long
		Accompanist: Stephanie Kwan
Adriana Davies	Poems “Dark Elegies 4” and “This Love”	Adriana Davies
		Accompanist: Stephanie Kwan
Verdi Readings	Introduction	Adriana Davies
	Verdi, fall 1851	Carlo Amodio
	Giuseppina Strepponi, December 5 th , 1860	Antonella Ciancibello-Normey

Romantic Love: Croce [Cross]

As with many great romances, eventually there is trouble in paradise. While Verdi was apparently committed to Strepponi in the latter part of their life together she was troubled by the attentions that he paid to soprano Teresa Stoltz.

Introduction		Adriana Davies
Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i> “La donna è mobile”	Ron Long
		Accompanist: Stephanie Kwan
Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Otello</i> “Salce” [“Willow Song”]	Denice Bennett
		Accompanist: Emilio De Mercato
	<i>Otello</i> “Ave Maria” [evening only]	Denice Bennett & Emilio De Mercato
Adriana Davies	Poems: “Dark Elegy 6” and “Dark Elegy 7” [evening only] “Arie Amorse”	Adriana Davies Accompanist: Emilio De Mercato
Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i> “Bella figlia dell’amore”	Emilio De Mercato
Verdi Readings	Introduction	Adriana Davies
	Giuseppina Strepponi, March 1874 [evening only]	Antonella Ciancibello-Normey
	Giuseppina Strepponi, April 1876	

Fathers and Daughters

In Verdi's own time, and certainly since, there have been rumours of "secret" children that Giuseppina bore him (three have been documented). Since he steadfastly refused to marry her, these children could not be allowed to mar his heroic reputation. Like others of their famous contemporaries, the Verdis made these children disappear. It is believed that the first – a son called Giuseppe – was born in May 1850 and was abandoned at the Ospedale Maggiore in Cremona. It appears to have been a common practice to deposit unwanted infants at churches or convents. Another child, a little girl called "Santa Streppini" was left at the Cremona nunnery in October 1851. She was adopted by a couple who owned a farm adjacent to Verdi's home. The third child was a boy.

Introduction		Adriana Davies
Adriana Davies	Poem "Who is your father?"	Adriana Davies Accompanist: Stephanie Kwan
Giuseppe Verdi	<i>Rigoletto</i> "Caro nome" [Lunch-time performance only] <i>Traviata</i> "Brindisi" [evening only]	Emilio De Mercato, Vladimir Ruffino Emilio De Mercato and Stephanie Kwan