

Giuseppe Verdi
LA TRAVIATA

conducted by Adrian Kelly



LA TRAVIATA

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

Libretto by Francesco Piave, based on Dumas' play, *La Dame aux Camélias*

Sung in Italian with English side-titles

A Buxton International Festival and Norwich Theatre production, featuring the Buxton International Festival Orchestra.

📅 DATES AND TIMES

Saturday 11 July	7.15pm
Wednesday 15 July	2pm
Saturday 18 July	7.15pm
Wednesday 22 July	7.15pm
Saturday 25 July	7.15pm

🏠 VENUE

Buxton Opera House

🕒 DURATION

2 hours and 30 minutes, including a 20-minute interval

OPERA TALKS

For evening performances at 6pm
in the Opera House

For the matinee performance at 12.45pm
in the Opera House

CREATIVES

Adrian Kelly
James Hurley
Corina Würsch

Fergus McAlpine

Elliott Squire
Zahra Mansouri
Ben Pickersgill
Erika Gundesen

Conductor
Director
Assistant Director/
Movement Director
Assistant Conductor/
Chorus Master
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Repetiteur

CAST

Alexandra Nowakowski
Alina Adamski
Tigran Melkonyan
André Heyboer
Frances Gregory
Amy J Payne
Harry Thatcher
Christopher Nairne
George Robarts
John Ieuan Jones
James Liu
Angel Gabriel
Alice Oakley-Jones

Violetta Valéry
Violetta Valéry (22 July)
Alfredo Germont
Giorgio Germont
Flora Bervoix
Annina
Gastone de Letorières
Barone Douphol
Marchese d'Obigny
Dottore Grenvil
Giuseppe
Dancer
Dancer

CHORUS

Soprano

Chloé Hare-Jones, Jessica Lawley, Daniella Sicari, Bonnie Staude*, Tessa Tang*

Mezzo-soprano

Cara Blaikie, Helen Maree Cooper, Merel-Magali Cox*, Eiblin Eddy*, Catrine Kirkman, Claire Runcie*, Kristen Gregory*, Aidan McCusker*, Samuel Mills, Moses Torto

Tenor

Charlie Barker*, Harry Priestley*

Baritone/Bass

*Members of the Young Artists Programme

ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Eleanor Corr, Laura Custodio, Laura Embrey, Ian Flower, Paula Smart, Shirley Richards

Violin II

Simon Gilks, Rebecca Thompson, Laura Concar, Jody Smith, Sarah Whittingham

Viola

Carol Ella, Henrietta Hill, Mike Dale, Florence Corr

Cello

Lucy Arch, Barbara Grunthall, Graham Morris

Bass

James Manson, Thomas Betts

Flute

Sarah Whewell, Hugues Roberts

Oboe

Rees Webster, Alec Harmon

Clarinet

Matthew Dunn, Daniel Bayley

Bassoon

Georgina Powell, Rachel Whibley

Horn

Naomi Atherton, Jenny Cox,

Dave Tollington, Peter Richards

Trumpet

Tracey Redfern, Robbie Richardson

Trombone

Tim Chatterton, Tony Boorer,

Jack Rowlands

Tuba

Ryan Breen

Timpani

John Melbourne

Percussion

Harry Percy

Harp

Angharad Huw



SYNOPSIS

ACT I

The salon in Violetta's house

Violetta Valery, the famous Parisian courtesan, hosts a lavish comeback party at her home after recovering from illness. Her benefactor Baron Douphol refuses to propose a toast. Violetta is introduced to Alfredo Germont, a young admirer who has loved her from afar. The guests are amused by Alfredo's seemingly naïve devotion and ask him to propose a toast instead. He sings a brindisi, a drinking song, celebrating true love, while Violetta responds in praise of free love. Violetta suddenly feels faint. All the other guests leave but Alfredo returns to her. When he declares his love, Violetta is touched by his sincerity. She gives him a camelia, asking him to return when the flower has wilted. As camelias fade rapidly, he realises that this means he will see her again the following day. Alone, Violetta wonders if true love is possible, and whether Alfredo could be the man to fulfil her need for love, but decides to cling to her free, pleasure-seeking life as a courtesan.

ACT II

Scene 1

Violetta's country house

Violetta and Alfredo are living together in a country villa. Violetta has fallen in love with Alfredo and has left her old life behind. When Alfredo discovers Violetta is selling her possessions to fund their lifestyle, he leaves for Paris to secure money. Violetta receives an invitation from Flora to attend a party at her house that night.

Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, arrives. He insists that Violetta must break off the relationship, as her reputation is threatening his daughter's marriage prospects. She says she cannot end the relationship as she loves Alfredo too much. Giorgio appeals to her better nature and explains that her liaison with Alfredo has no future in the world outside of their safe country haven. Heartbroken, and with growing remorse, she finally agrees and writes a farewell letter to Alfredo. She accepts the invitation to the ball and rushes off to Paris.

While Alfredo reads Violetta's letter, his father returns and tries to comfort his son. Alfredo finds the party invitation on the desk, and suspects that Baron Douphol is behind Violetta's return to Paris. He decides to confront Violetta at the party.

Scene 2

The party at Flora's house

Alfredo is at the gambling table at the party when Violetta arrives with Baron Douphol. Alfredo is furious and proclaims that he will take Violetta home with him. Violetta quietly asks him to leave. Believing she has abandoned him for her old life, Alfredo denounces and humiliates Violetta in front of the guests. Baron Douphol challenges Alfredo to a duel, while Violetta declares her love to Alfredo to no avail.

ACT III

Violetta's bedroom

Violetta is dying of tuberculosis, deserted by her friends. Only Doctor Grenvil and her maid Annina remain, tending to her in her last hours. Giorgio Germont has written to tell Violetta that Alfredo was not injured in the duel, and that he has told his son about her sacrifice for the sake of Alfredo's family. Alfredo arrives to beg for forgiveness, and they dream of a new life together, but it is too late. Violetta dies in his arms.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

'Among those admirable machines for producing beautiful sound ... *La traviata* is an island. An island of Circe. A place of enchantments. A carnivalesque opera born of a fascinating crystallisation of masks: those of Dumas' intimate theatre, those of a musical aesthetic perhaps more bourgeois than revolutionary. *La traviata* appears to us not as the "truthful opera" that it is so often described, but as a sumptuous mirror, perfectly suited to perpetuate painful ambiguities and stinging unspoken truths.' (Marie-Françoise Vieuille)

Our way into *La traviata* – visually and theatrically – was the jewel box of Marie Duplessis. Marie was a beautiful and successful courtesan in mid-nineteenth century Paris, who died of tuberculosis on 3 February 1847 at the age of twenty-three, after a tumultuous life haunted by the spectre of illness. Within only a few weeks of her death, her belongings were auctioned off to pay her debts. Born Alphonsine Rose before she recreated herself as Marie, Duplessis was the real woman behind the central character of Alexandre Dumas' 1848 novel, *La Dame aux Camélias*. Dumas was one of Marie's lovers and he remade her on the page as Marguerite Gautier. Piave's libretto for Verdi's opera is based directly on Dumas' theatrical adaptation of his novel. It premiered at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in Paris in 1852, and Marie Duplessis can be viewed as the original inspiration – or foundational blueprint – for Verdi's operatic heroine, Violetta Valéry.

We found a photograph of Marie's jewel box printed in Nicholas John's anthology *Violetta and Her Sisters: the Lady of the Camélias* and this faded, antique object felt expressive of some of the fundamental dynamics which underpin the story of Verdi's opera. A decadent item that keeps treasures hidden under lock and key, the jewel box evokes the gilded cage of Violetta's expensive existence as a high-class courtesan in nineteenth-century Paris. She is sustained by the financial backing of a wealthy man who expects exclusive access to her life and attentions: '[In Paris] a furnished house, a carriage, and three servants are a truly great seduction; love has nothing equally powerful.' (Abbé Prévost, *Manon Lescaut*). Although Dumas' novel frequently addresses the awkward practicalities of Marguerite's compromised existence, the libretto of Verdi's opera never explicitly establishes Violetta's true social status as a courtesan, yet the implicit assumption beneath the allusive suggestiveness of its title (*la traviata*: 'the fallen woman') leaves little doubt. Sophie Fuller writes: 'As the myth of the lady of the camélias moves from novel to play to opera the themes of sickness, sacrifice and death become stronger ... [but] the power of a celebrated courtesan retreats further and further into the distance ... We miss many of those vulgar little details about sex and money that almost make the Marguerite of the novel believable.'

We set out to reclaim some of the 'vulgar little details' of Violetta's constrictive reality, which leave her little room to pursue dreams of love and health: *Ah, in cotal guisa v'ucciderete / ... in this way you are going to kill yourself* (Alfredo, Act 1). We

looked at paintings by Toulouse Lautrec for a grittier, more direct representation of the figure of the courtesan and prostitute in the Belle Époque, alongside more modern depictions of the darker side of the Parisian *demimonde*, like Bertrand Bonello's 2011 film *L'Apollonide – Souvenirs de la maison close*, which presents an uncompromising vision of the human toll of sex work on a group of impoverished young women in Paris in 1899 and 1900, who are effectively imprisoned within the stifling luxury of a high-class brothel until they are able to pay their debts.

Marie Duplessis' jewel box objectifies its owner and through her portrait on the front acts as a remembrance of her in life, as well as a memorial to her in death. It calls to mind the personal objects and mementos of Marguerite that Armand Duval clings to at the start of Dumas' novel: the engraved copy of *Manon Lescaut*, which he offers to buy from the novel's narrator for an exorbitant sum, and the letters which resurrect her voice from beyond the grave. Marie's portrait also recalls the miniature that Violetta gives to Alfredo as she is dying in the opera's final act: an artefact which evokes the memory of her past life (*Prendi: quest'è l'immagine de' miei passati giorni / Take this picture of me in happier days gone by*) and a token of his life to come with his future wife (*Se una pudica vergine ... Sposa ti sia lo vo' / Le porgi questa effigie / If you meet a maiden one day to marry ... give it to her*).

As a dramatic space, the jewel box structure acts both as a gilded cage to contain the jewel of the Parisian *demimonde* and as a theatre of memories in which to stage the most vivid moments from the last months of Violetta's life. Peripheral characters circle the box from the outside, approaching it with a prurient desire to prize it open and reveal its secrets – recalling the voyeuristic visitors in the novel, men and women alike, who wander through Marguerite's apartment scrutinising everything before it is auctioned, only days after her death. Alfredo is the box's principal spectator and its helpless protagonist: compulsively haunted by Violetta's tragic death, he is the key that opens the box, releasing its memories, and the victim condemned to relive his guilt and trauma over and over again. As the late Sergio Sablich wrote of the opera's climactic moment: 'Only the memory of Violetta will remain, a pang of the heart difficult to forget – for those who knew her in life or recreated her on stage, and for us, who continue to relive her immortal story.'

James Hurley



The jewel box of Marie Duplessis

(collection Mary Jane Phillips-Matz; photo Tom McGovern)



Set design models by Elliott Squire



Adrian Kelly

Conductor

Adrian studied at the University of Cambridge and the Royal Northern College of Music, was a member of the Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House and then became coach at the Hamburg State Opera. From 2010–2019 he was first Kapellmeister and then Music Director at the Salzburg Landestheater. Noteworthy productions in Salzburg include Krenek's *Jonny spiel*

auf, Verdi's *Rigoletto*, Massenet's *Werther* and a cycle of Mozart's Da Ponte operas. He has been Artistic Director of Buxton International Festival since 2019, and Head of the International Opera Studio at Zurich Opera since the start of the 2020/2021 season. In Zurich he has conducted performances of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Donizetti's *Viva la mamma*, and Rihm's *Jakob Lenz*.



James Hurley

Director

James read English at Cambridge University and holds an MPhil in American Literature. Directing credits include: *La rondine* (Opera North); *Le Carnaval de Venise* (Vache Baroque); *Chérubin*, *Le Docteur Miracle* (Royal Academy Opera); *L'elisir d'amore* (Iford Arts); *L'ospedale* (Aldeburgh/Wilton's Music Hall); *Le nozze di Figaro* (Kilden Teater-og Konserhus); *The Magic Flute*

(Wild Arts); *Don Giovanni* (British Youth Opera); *La Belle Hélène*, *Idomeneo*, *Venus and Adonis* (Blackheath Halls). He has directed revivals for ENO, Opera North, Glyndebourne, and ETO, and worked on the directing staff at the National Theatre, Metropolitan Opera, ROH, Salzburg Festival, Royal Danish Opera, Barbican, and the EIF.



Corina Würsch

Assistant Director/Movement Director

Corina is an international movement director and choreographer. She holds a BA (HONS) in Contemporary Dance from Trinity Laban Conservatoire for Music and Dance and a postgraduate Diploma from the Royal Academy of Dance. Her opera credits include

Der Florentiner Hut (Oper Wuppertal 2026); *Iphigenia in Tauris* (Blackheath Halls Opera 2025); *Die Zauberflöte* (RAM 2025), *L'infedeltà Delusa* (RCS 2025), and *Ernani* (BIF 2024). Other projects include *The Peripherals* (Series 1 for TV), adverts for Costa Coffee and Pressant, shows for London Fashion week and the London Cabaret Club. Corina is a Staff Director for the English National Opera.



Fergus McAlpine

Assistant Conductor/Chorus Master

Fergus graduated from the Dutch National Conducting Master in 2020 and since then has performed with the Noord Nederlands Orkest, Oper Köln and at the Biennale di Venezia with Ensemble Modern. He also assisted a number of projects with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and returned to the Asko/Schönberg Ensemble, where he previously made his

debut standing in for Reinbert de Leeuw. He is the founder of the Madhouse Orchestra, an international festival orchestra based in Harrogate. Also a composer, Fergus' first opera *Wonderkids on Tour* recently concluded its third revival with the Nederlandse Reisopera since its premiere in 2024.



Elliott Squire

Set Designer

Elliott is a Canadian set and costume designer working across theatre and opera. He is a graduate of Edinburgh's Scenehouse Programme and he holds a BFA in Theatre Design from the University of British Columbia. Opera highlights include: *Rigoletto* (IF Opera), *Shorts*, *La canterina* & *The Boatswain's Mate*

(Buxton International Festival), *Dewi in the Deep* (Royal Ballet and Opera), *Candide* (Blackheath Halls Opera), *Rip Van Winkle* (Gothic Opera), *Giulio Cesare* (Bury Court Opera), and *Captain Blood's Revenge* (Norfolk Into Opera Festival).



Zahra Mansouri

Costume Designer

Of Algerian, Polish and Scottish descent, Zahra Mansouri studied at Central Saint Martins. She has a background in competitive Ballroom and Latin Dancing, where she refined her skills in creating competitive dance wear in collaboration with leading dance couture houses, Chrisanne and Dance Sport International.

Recent projects include *L'Etoile* (Opera Zuid), *The Elixir of Love* (English National Opera), *The Secret of the Black Spider*, *Susanna and Love Life* (Opera North), *La Sonnambula*, *La traviata* and *La liberazione di Ruggiero* (Buxton International Festival), *Semele* (Blackheath Halls), and *Dead Man Walking* (Oldenburg).



Ben Pickersgill

Lighting Designer

Recent lighting designs include *Don Quichotte* (Opéra de Lausanne), *Rodelinda*, *Fidelio* (Garsington Opera), *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* (Greek National Opera), *The Merry Widow*, *Il Trittico* (Scottish Opera), *Falstaff*, *La Rondine*, *Trouble in Tahiti* (Opera North), *Odyssey: A Heroic Pantomime* (Jermyn Street Theatre)

and *A Christmas Carol* (Theatre by the Lake). As associate Lighting Designer, projects include *Macbeth* (Palau de les Arts, Valencia), *The Inheritance* (West End and Broadway), *The Lehman Trilogy* (West End) and *Elizabeth* (Royal Ballet).

Erika Gundesen

Repetiteur

Canadian pianist and conductor Erika Gundesen is a distinguished graduate of the University of British Columbia and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Erika was a National Opera Studio Young Artist from 2017-2018, a Britten Pears Young Artist in 2019, and a

Scottish Opera Emerging Artist from 2018-2019. She works as a freelance repetiteur and conductor for opera and theatre in London, including productions at RBO and ENO, and is currently assistant musical director of the West End production *Operation Mincemeat*.



Alexandra Nowakowski

Violetta Valéry (Coloratura soprano)

Praised by Opera News for her 'impassioned singing', Polish-American coloratura soprano Alexandra Nowakowski made her Metropolitan Opera debut in the 2025/26 season as Amina in Rolando Villazón's production of *La*

Sonnambula. She returns to the Met in 26/27 to sing the first Flower Maiden *Parsifal*. Recent roles include Gilda *Rigoletto* and the title role in *Manon* (Ópera de Oviedo), the Queen of the Night (Washington National Opera), and Zerbinetta (Wolf Trap Opera).



Alina Adamski

Violetta Valéry (Soprano) (22 July)

Soprano Alina Adamski was a member of the Opera Academy of the National Opera Theatre in Warsaw. In 2017, she participated in the Young Singers Project at the Salzburger Festspiele, where she performed the role of Madame Herz in Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor*. Career highlights include Gilda *Rigoletto* (Frankfurt Opera), Konstanze

Die Entführung aus dem Serail (Irish National Opera), Rhinemaiden and Woodbird in the Ring Cycle with the London Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Festival Hall, conducted by Vladimir Jurowski, as well as appearances in Stuttgart, Leipzig, Zürich and at the Salzburg Festival.



Tigran Melkonyan

Alfredo Germont (Tenor)

Armenian tenor Tigran Melkonyan has been a soloist at the Armenian State Opera and Ballet Theater since 2022. Opera roles include *Nemorino L'elisir d'amore*; Edgardo *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Alfredo *La traviata* (Petruszeli Theatre, Bari); Duke *Rigoletto*; Rodolfo *La bohème*; Pinkerton *Madama Butterfly*;

Lensky *Eugene Onegin*; Young Gypsy *Aleko*; Saro *Anoush*; the title role in *Sayat Nova* (Al. Harutyunyan), Persian Bard *Almast* (Al. Spendaryan). He is a winner of national and international competitions, including: Romansiada Competition (first prize), Singing Armenia Competition (first prize), the I. Bogacheva St. Petersburg Competition (second prize, Russia).



André Heyboer

Giorgio Germont (Baritone)

André Heyboer has performed on most of the major world stages and has sung under the baton of eminent conductors like Marco Armiliato, Roberto Abbado, and Plácido Domingo. Previous roles include Alfio *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Tonio *Pagliacci*, Sharpless *Madama Butterfly*, Athanael *Thaïs*, Zurga *Les Pêcheurs*

de Perles, The High Priest *Samson and Dalila*, Nilakantha Lakmé, Albert Werther, Germont *La traviata*, Iago *Otello*, and the title roles of *Nabucco* and *Macbeth*. Recent performances include Scarpia *Tosca* (Avignon), Miller Luisa Miller (Tours), Marquis de la Force *Dialogues des Carmélites* (Massy), and Carlo Ernani (BIF).



Frances Gregory

Flora Bervoix (Mezzo-soprano)

An alumna, of Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's Rising Stars Programme, Frances Gregory created Ellie Gifford *Under the Greenwood Tree* (Dorset Opera Festival) and further engagements include: Marie *L'Enfance du Christ* (NFM Wrocław Philharmonic); Second Harlot *Samson* (Gabrieli Consort & Players);

Arnalta *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (The English Concert tour; The Grange Festival); Idamante *Idomeneo* (Chelsea Opera Group); Cherubino *Le nozze di Figaro* (The Mozartists; Opera North); and Luna *Untapped Tales* (London's Royal Ballet and Opera).



Amy J Payne

Annina (Mezzo-soprano)

Recent appearances include *The Old Woman Candide* (WNO), Arnalta *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Mother Goose *The Rake's Progress* (English Touring Opera), Dame Carruthers *The Yeoman of the Guard* (Opera Holland

Park), Petra *A Little Night Music*, Tisbe *La Cenerentola*, Cornelia *Giulio Cesare*, Third Lady *The Magic Flute*, Olga Olsen *Street Scene* and Annina *La traviata* (Opera North).





Harry Thatcher

Gastone de Letorières (Tenor)

Harry graduated from The Royal College of Music International Opera School and was a Young Artist at Glyndebourne in 2019. Baritone engagements include Schaunard *La bohème* (Opera Holland Park); Escamillo *Carmen* (Scottish

Opera (access performances) and jump-ins for Waterperry Opera Festival); Riff *West Side Story* (Gobierno de Aragon Lyric and Dance Festival), and Silvio *Pagliacci* (OHP).



Christopher Nairne

Barone Douphol (Baritone)

Scottish baritone Christopher Nairne is a Samling Artist and graduate of the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. In 2025 he made his Scottish Opera (co production with Opera Holland Park) debut as Cascada *Merry Widow*. Other roles include Marcello *La bohème* (Nevill Holt Opera),

Count Carl-Magnus *A Little Night Music* (Leeds Playhouse/Opera North), Albert *Werther* (Lyric Opera Productions, Dublin), and cover Morales *Carmen*, Horemhab *Akhmaten*, Marchese d'Obigny *La traviata* and Earl Mountarat *Iolanthe* (English National Opera).

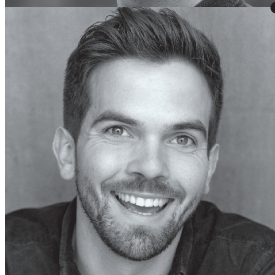


George Robarts

Marchese d'Obigny (Baritone)

George Robarts is the winner of the 2025 Lotte Lenya Competition, awarded by the Kurt Weill Foundation. Opera highlights include Luiz *The Gondoliers* (English Touring Opera), Count

Almaviva & Leporello (Cumbria Opera), Junius *The Rape of Lucretia* (BYO), and Bottom *The Fairy Queen* (Longborough). He has sung in recitals alongside Graham Johnson and Felicity Lott.



John Ieuan Jones

Dottore Grenvil (Baritone)

John Ieuan Jones is a Welsh baritone and graduate of the RNCM. Recent highlights include Antonio *The Gondoliers* and Silvio (cover) *Pagliacci* (English Touring Opera), Trio 3

in *Trouble in Tahiti* (Mid Wales Opera), Fosseyer *Hamlet* (Buxton International Festival), and guest soloist appearances at the Leric Festival and the BBC Proms UK Tour.



James Liu

Giuseppe (Tenor)

James is a British-Chinese tenor and graduate of the Guildhall School of Music Drama. He has performed with ENO, Opera North and BIF. James recently made his debut with The Opera

Makers as Calaf in their production of *Turandot*, and covered the role of Don José for BIF's production of *La Tragédie de Carmen*.



Angel Gabriel

(Dancer)

Angel is an Argentine-Spanish multidisciplinary artist with international experience in dance and performing arts. He has performed with major opera houses including Royal Opera House and

Gran Teatre del Liceu. Co-founder of Tartago and Homeland Dance Company, he focuses on choreography and interdisciplinary projects with social and artistic impact.



Alice Oakley-Jones

(Dancer)

Alice is a freelance dance professional with roots in classical ballet and contemporary dance. She trained at the Royal Academy of Dance, followed by a year's apprenticeship with The London Ballet Company. Her career spans the industry with

credits in international theatre productions, film and advertising campaigns. Most recently she danced the role of Clara *The Nutcracker* (tour with Prague festival ballet).