

Listening Guide

Verdi: *Rigoletto*, Act III, excerpts

FIRST PERFORMANCE: 1851, Venice

LIBRETTIST: Francesco Maria Piave

BASIS: Play, *Le roi s'amuse*, by Victor Hugo

MAJOR CHARACTERS: The Duke of Mantua (tenor)
Rigoletto, the Duke's jester, a hunchback (baritone)
Gilda, Rigoletto's daughter (soprano)
Sparafucile, an assassin (bass)
Maddalena, Sparafucile's sister (contralto)

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR: Opening orchestral ritornello that returns in the middle and end to unify the aria.
Memorable aria in a lilting triple meter, with 2 verses sung strophically.
Quartet reflects the emotions and points of view of each character: the Duke, Maddalena, Gilda, and Rigoletto.

Aria: "La donna è mobile" (Duke)

Form: Strophic, with refrain

Orchestral introduction previews the Duke's solo; opening melody of aria:



*The Duke, in a simple cavalry officer's uniform, sings in the inn;
Sparafucile, Gilda, and Rigoletto listen outside.*

DUKE

La donna è mobile
qual piuma al vento,
muta d'accento,
e di pensiero.
sempre un amabile
leggiadro viso,
in pianto o in riso,
è menzognero.
La donna è mobile, etc.

È sempre misero
chi a le s'affida,
chi lei confida
mal cauto il core!
pur mai non sentesi
felice appieno
chi su quel seno

Woman is fickle
like a feather in the wind,
she changes her words
and her thoughts.
Always lovable,
and a lovely face,
weeping or laughing,
is lying.
Woman is fickle, etc.

The man's always wretched
who believes in her,
whorecklessly entrusts
his heart to her!
And yet one who never
drinks love on that breast
never feels

non liba amore!
La donna è mobile, etc.

entirely happy!
Woman is fickle, etc.

Sparafucile comes back in with a bottle of wine and two glasses, which he sets on the table; then he strikes the ceiling twice with the hilt of his long sword. At this signal, a laughing young woman in gypsy dress leaps down the stairs: the Duke runs to embrace her, but she escapes him. Meanwhile Sparafucile has gone into the street, where he speaks softly to Rigoletto.

SPARAFUCILE

È là il vostr'uomo . . .
Viver dee o morire?

Your man is there . . .
Must he live or die?

RIGOLETTO

Più tardi tornerò l'opra a compire. I'll return later to complete the deed.
Sparafucile goes off behind the house toward the river. Gilda and Rigoletto remain in the street, the Duke and Maddalena on the ground floor.

Quartet: "Un d " (Duke, Maddalena, Gilda, Rigoletto)

DUKE

Un d , se ben rammentomi,
o bella, t'incontrai . . .
Mi piacque di te chiedere,
e intesi che qui stai.
Or sappi, che d'allora
sol te quest'alma adora!

One day, if I remember right,
I met you, O beauty . . .
I was pleased to ask about you,
and I learned that you live here.
Know then, that since that time
my soul adores only you!

GILDA

Iniquo!

Villain!

MADDALENA

Ah, ah! . . . e vent'altre appresso
le scorda forse adesso?
Ha un'aria il signorino
da vero libertino . . .

Ha, ha! . . . And does it now perhaps
forget twenty others?
The young gentleman looks like
a true libertine . . .

DUKE *(starting to embrace her)*

S . . . un mostro son . . .

Yes . . . I'm a monster . . .

GILDA

Ah padre mio!

Ah, Father!

MADDALENA

Lasciatemi, stordito.

Let me go, foolish man!

DUKE

Ih che fracasso!

Ah, what a fuss!

MADDALENA

Stia saggio.

Be good.

DUKE

E tu sii docile,
non fare tanto chiasso.
Ogni saggezza chiudesi
nel gaudio e nell'amore.

And you, be yielding,
don't make so much noise.
All wisdom concludes
in pleasure and in love.

La bella mano candida! (He takes her hand.)
What a lovely, white hand!

MADDALENA
Scherzate voi, signore. You're joking, sir.

DUKE
No, no. No, no.

MADDALENA
Son brutta. I'm ugly.

DUKE
Abbracciarmi. Embrace me.

GILDA
Iniquo! Villain!

MADDALENA
Ebro! You're drunk!

DUKE
D'amor ardente. With ardent love.

MADDALENA
Signor l'indifferente, My indifferent sir,
vi piace canzonar? would you like to sing?

DUKE
No, no, ti vo' sposar. No, no, I want to marry you.

MADDALENA
Ne voglio la parola. I want your word.

DUKE (ironic)
Amabile figliuola! Lovable maiden!

RIGOLETTO (to Gilda, who has seen and heard all)
non ti basta ancor? Isn't that enough for you yet?

GILDA
Iniquo traditor! Villainous betrayer!

MADDALENA
Ne voglio la parola. I want your word.

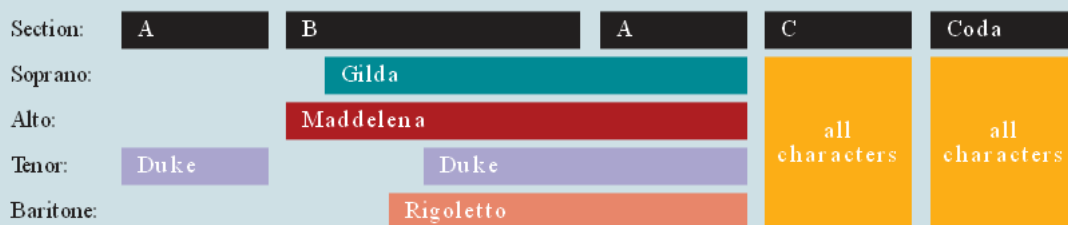
DUKE
Amabile figliuola! Lovable maiden!

RIGOLETTO
non ti basta ancor? Isn't that enough for you yet?

Quartet (2nd part): "Bella figlia" (Duke, Maddalena, Gilda, Rigoletto)

Overall form: A-B-A -C

Diagram showing how characters interact in the ensemble and how they fit into the musical structure:



Opening melody of "Bella figlia," sung by Duke:



DUKE

Bella figlia dell'amore,
 schiavo son de' vezzi tuoi;
 con un detto sol tu puoi
 le mie pene consolar.
 Vieni, e senti del mio core
 il frequente palpitar . . .
 Con un detto sol tu puoi
 le mie pene consolar.

Beautiful daughter of love,
 I am the slave of your charms;
 with a single word you can
 console my sufferings.
 Come, and feel the quick beating
 of my heart . . .
 With a single word you can
 console my sufferings.

A

(Many text lines repeated)

MADDALENA

Ah! ah! rido ben di core,
 ch' tai baie costan poco.

Ha! Ha! I laugh heartily,
 for such tales cost little.

B

GILDA

Ah! cos' parlar d'amore . . .

Ah! To speak thus of love . . .

MADDALENA

Quanto valga il vostro gioco,
 mel credete, s' apprezzar.

Believe me, I can judge
 how much your game is worth.

GILDA

. . . a me pur l'infame ho udito!

. . . I too have heard the villain so!

RIGOLETTO (to Gilda)

Taci, il piangere non vale.

Hush, weeping is of no avail.

GILDA

Infelice cor tradito,
 per angoscia non scoppiar. No, no!

Unhappy, betrayed heart,
 do not burst with anguish. Ah, no!

MADDALENA

Son avvezza, bel signore,
 ad un simile scherzare.
 Mio bel signor!

I'm accustomed, handsome sir,
 to similar joking.
 My handsome sir!

DUKE

Bella figlia dell'amore, etc.
Vieni!

Beautiful daughter of love, etc.
Come!

A

RIGOLETTA

Ch'ei mentiva sei sicura.
Taci, e mia sar la cura
la vendetta d'affrettar.
s, pronta fia, sar fatale,
io saprò lo fulminar.
taci, taci...

You are sure that he was lying.
Hush, and I will take care
to hasten vengeance.
Yes, it will be swift and fatal,
I will know how to strike him down.
Hush, hush...

ALL CHARACTERS

Repeated text from above.

C

Coda, featuring all characters.