

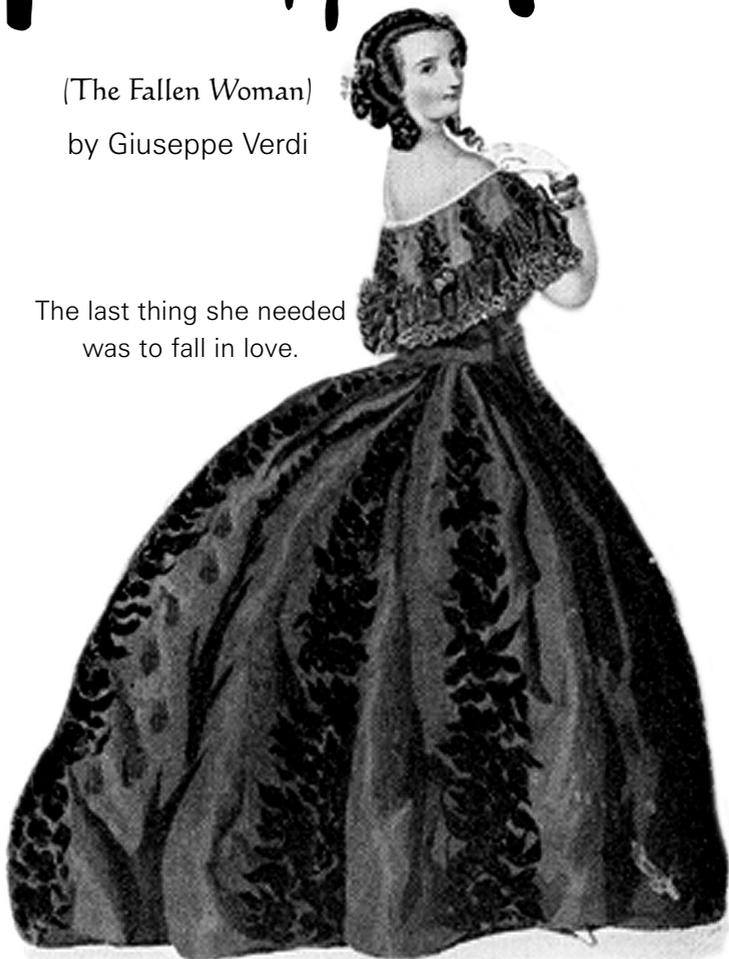
MIDLAND MUSIC MAKERS PRESENTS

La Traviata

(The Fallen Woman)

by Giuseppe Verdi

The last thing she needed
was to fall in love.



Tuesday 5th, Wednesday 6th, Friday 8th, Saturday 9th November 2002 7.30pm

Midland Music Makers
Opera

The Crescent Theatre 20 Shepcote Street
Brindleyplace Birmingham B16 8AE 

Midland Music Makers
Opera

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Set constructed by Andy Martin
Set painted by Kate Ford, Michael Clarke
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Lighting Richard Pardoe-Williams
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La Traviata

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave. English translation by Ruth and Thomas Martin

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CHARACTERS

Violetta Valery	<i>a well-known courtesan</i>	Judith Buckle
Alfredo Germont	<i>Violetta's admirer</i>	Richard Owen
Giorgio Germont	<i>his father</i>	Andrew Ashwin
Flora Bervoix	<i>another courtesan</i>	Lynda Shepherd
Gaston	<i>Alfredo's friend</i>	Paul Forbes
Baron Douphol	<i>Violetta's protector</i>	Robert Hills
Marquis d'Obigny	<i>Flora's protector</i>	John Read
Annina	<i>Violetta's maid/companion</i>	Valerie Matthews
Doctor Grenvil	<i>Violetta's physician</i>	David Mellor
Joseph	<i>Violetta's manservant</i>	Barry Matthews
Messenger	Rafik Taibjee

CHORUS LADIES:

Sally Allsop, Angie Barnbrook, June Borthwick, Patricia Bullock, Susan Cash, Pam Davies, Sheila Giles, Norma Johnson, Valerie Matthews, Patricia Nixon, Lorraine Payne, Janet Stanley, Debbie Wheate, Dee White, Marrian Yates.

CHORUS GENTLEMEN:

Nick Freear, Bill Gurney, Richard Kemp, Barry Matthews, Tim Morris, Keith Nield, Malcolm Oakes, Bob Shepherd, Rafik Taibjee, Martin Wright.

GYPSY DANCERS:

Angie Barnbrook, Susan Cash, Lorraine Payne, Janet Stanley.

Don Piquillo **Martin Campos**

LEADER OF THE ORCHESTRA **Michael Johnson**

Our thanks must also go to anyone who has contributed to this production and whom we may have inadvertently omitted.

Synopsis

Act I

Summertime in Paris in about 1850. A party is taking place at the Salon of the vivacious and popular Violetta Valéry, a notorious courtesan. Alfredo Germont is introduced to her as a new admirer. He is nervous to find himself in such close proximity to the woman he has admired from afar for months, but finally attracts her attention when he agrees to sing a drinking song for the company's amusement. Alfredo's success is noticed by the jealous Baron Douphol, one of Violetta's more sinister patrons. As the guests withdraw to the ballroom, Violetta is overcome by a fit of weakness, a symptom of her increasingly debilitating consumptive illness. She remains behind to recover, and discovers herself alone with a concerned Alfredo. He urges her to give up her damaging way of life and let him care for her. Violetta is at first amused by his declarations of true love, but finally yields sufficiently to offer him a camellia, with the instruction to return it the next day. The guests take their leave and Violetta is left alone to muse on the prospect of abandoning her glamorous salon existence for a life of love with Alfredo.

5 minute interlude

Act II Scene I

It is an early winter morning. Violetta and Alfredo have lived for several months in a country house near Paris. Alfredo discovers to his shame that Violetta has been selling her possessions in order to pay the bills and rushes off to Paris to re-arrange his own financial affairs. During his absence Violetta receives a visit from Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont. He pleads with her to give Alfredo up for the sake of a younger sister, whose marriage prospects are threatened by the scandal surrounding Alfredo's liaison



with Violetta. She finally agrees to renounce Alfredo forever. When Alfredo returns she tells him that she is going out for a few hours and bids him a final passionate farewell. A short time later, Alfredo receives a letter from her telling him that she has returned to the protection of the Baron Douphol. His father witnesses his grief and anger and tries in vain to comfort him but Alfredo has discovered an invitation to Flora's for that evening, and is intent on following Violetta to Paris.

20 minute INTERVAL

Act II Scene II

Late evening the same day. Violetta's friend Flora is holding a masquerade at her Paris house. The guests entertain each other with fortune telling and dancing. Alfredo arrives and joins the others at the card table. The mood darkens when the Baron arrives with Violetta and forbids her to speak to Alfredo. Alfredo and the Baron confront one another across the card table, and Alfredo wins large sums of money from Douphol. The guests move into the supper room but Violetta returns to speak to Alfredo in secret. Fearing for his life if the Baron is angered, she urges Alfredo to leave the party. Alfredo loses his temper and calls everyone in to witness that he is paying Violetta in full for past services rendered. In a fit of rage he flings his winnings at her feet. Violetta collapses in despair and the guests react with shock, turning on Alfredo. Germont arrives and also expresses his disgust at his son's behaviour. Meanwhile, the Baron Douphol is intent on gaining satisfaction through a duel.

5 minute interlude

Act III

Violetta's bedroom a few weeks later. Despite the Doctor's encouragement, Violetta realises that she only has a few hours to live. She reads out a letter from Giorgio Germont; the Baron was wounded in a duel with Alfredo but is recovering. Alfredo has been abroad but will soon return to ask her forgiveness. Violetta fears he will be too late. She sleeps fitfully as a song from passing carnival goes drifts into her dreams. Alfredo returns and the lovers are briefly re-united in their hopes of leaving Paris and rekindling past happiness. Violetta tries to dress but collapses. Realising that she has reached the point of death she gives Alfredo her picture as a remembrance before she dies.

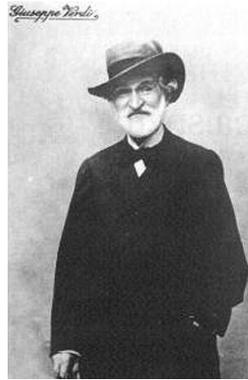
Curtain

Giuseppe Verdi

and the source of inspiration
for his passionate 'La Traviata'

Giuseppe Verdi was born in a small rural community in what is today the province of Parma. His early musical talents caught the attention of Busseto merchant and music lover Antonio Barezzi who undertook to finance a year of study in Milan for the young composer.

Returning to Busseto as music director for the commune, Verdi married Barezzi's daughter Margherita. Sadly Margherita did not live to see Verdi's later successes. She died in 1840, only months after the opening of Verdi's first opera, 'Oberto' at La Scala, Milan.



It seems natural that Verdi, a composer who instinctively explored human passions and dramatic tensions, should have been inspired by the Alexandre Dumas (fils) story of 'La Dame aux Camélias'. Dumas turned to a real life model for his Marguerite - (Verdi's Violetta) - Marie Duplessis who was Dumas's mistress for eleven months. Dumas's play was successfully staged in Paris in 1852, at a time when Verdi was known to have made several extended visits to the city where the artistic scene was witnessing a new vogue for realism. It seems more than likely that Verdi would have seen the play, and would have been more than aware of the popularity of the story. Parisian audiences were transfixed by this glimpse at the forbidden fruits of the demi-monde, and the deep shadows that lay behind the glamour and glitter of the kept woman's life style.

By October 1852, Verdi had obtained a copy of 'La Dame aux Camélias' on which he and Francesco Maria Piave based their new opera for the 1853 Venetian carnival season. 'La Traviata' opened at La Fenice, Venice, on 6th March 1853, only months after the Dumas play had taken Paris by storm. In 'La Traviata', Verdi sought to present an operatic subject that was bold and innovative for its generation. The opera proclaims Verdi's undisputed skill as his music unfolds this intense drama of human frailties.

biographies

ANDREW ASHWIN (Giorgio Germont)

Andrew currently studies singing in London with Gilles Denizot. A former student of Birmingham University, his choral experience includes concerts and a BBC television recording with the acclaimed 'Ex Cathedra'. On stage, he has played both *Figaro* and *Count Almaviva* in 'The Marriage of Figaro', the title role in 'Don Giovanni', *Mr. Trulove* in 'The Rake's Progress', *Gremm* in 'Eugene Onegin', and *Micha* in 'The Bartered Bride'. Future engagements include courses with 'Operalab', Paris and *Harapha* in Handel's 'Samson'. Over the Christmas period he shall perform a short series of solo recitals in his home county, Northumberland.

JUDITH BUCKLE (Violetta)

Judith was born in County Durham and studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. After gaining her AGSM with distinction she was an ad hoc member of the BBC Singers before joining the London Savoyards on their QE2 world cruises. She was a finalist in the NFMS Award and the ISM Young Musicians Scheme which gave her a lot of experience on the concert platform. Judith made her London debut at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon with the London Mozart Players in Beethoven's 'Choral Symphony' and then went on to sing Mendelssohn's 'Hymn of Praise' at the Royal Albert Hall and 'Sea Pictures' at the Royal Festival Hall. Judith's operatic career started when she sang for 5 years with Pavilion Opera, singing the roles of *Rosina*, *Dorabella*, *Cherubino* and *Violetta*. Since then she has sung over 40 major roles and favourites include *Orfeo* (Gluck) and *Dido* (Purcell) which she sang to great acclaim in Holland. Judith is in increasing demand as a recitalist and in the summer of 2000 she sang in a recital of Lord Berners' songs at the Three Choirs Festival in Hereford with the pianist Alan Cuckston. She has released a CD of art songs with the pianist Peter Selwyn, and a recording of 'Scena Rustica' by Alan Rawsthorne is due to be released shortly.

CHARLOTTE EXON (Musical Director)

Charlotte Exon is a music graduate of the University of Birmingham who specialises in both choral and orchestral conducting. Having been re-awarded the Hyperion Scholarship this year, she is embarking on her final year of doctoral study in music at the University of Birmingham. She also teaches part-time at the University. Other awards include the University of Birmingham Humanities Scholarship 2002 and the University of Birmingham Travel Scholarship 2002. She has had extensive conducting experience with University ensembles including the Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, Chamber Choir and the organisation and conductorship of the University Chamber Choir's first international music tour to Germany and the Ukraine. Charlotte also directs 'Cum Sancto Spiritu', which she established in 1997 as an orchestral and choral ensemble platform for young performers and composers, bringing together musicians from all over the country. She is Musical Director of the Vaughan Singers locally. Internationally, Charlotte is guest conductor of the Cherkassy Chamber Orchestra in the Ukraine, initiating a music development project there which included the establishment of a new orchestra and choir for the Cherkassy Region. Charlotte joined Midland Music Makers as MD last year, conducting the sparkling 'L'Elisir d'Amore'. This year she has led them through their concert season with works including Poulenc's 'Gloria', and has enjoyed developing their technique and repertoire this year.

PAUL FORBES (Gastone)

Originally from Long Eaton, Derbyshire, Paul moved to Birmingham 25 years ago. He soon established himself as a Gilbert and Sullivan tenor and has performed all 13 of the Savoy Operas (some several times). He trained with Mary Parsons for 13 years and has appeared in many musicals and operettas, in roles including *Tommy* in 'Brigadoon', *Camille* in 'The Merry Widow' and *Alfred* in 'Die Fledermaus'. Paul made his opera debut with Midland Music Makers as the Ballad Seller in 'Hugh the Drover'. His other opera credits include *Pang* in 'Turandot', *Malcolm* in 'Macbeth', *Don Basilio* in 'The Marriage of Figaro', *Borsa* in 'Rigoletto', *Dancaire* in 'Carmen' and *M. Triquet* in 'Eugene Onegin'.

KATE FORD (Set Designer)

Kate trained in Theatre Design at the University of Central England. She graduated in 1999 and since then has been working on opera and ballet design in London and Birmingham and teaching drawing at the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff. After 'La Traviata' she is designing costumes for the London Children's Ballet production of 'The Prince and the Pauper' in May.

ROBERT HILLS (Baron Douphol)

Robert is a relative newcomer to Midland Music Makers, making his debut last year as *Sergeant Belcore* in 'L'Elisir d'Amore'. Previously he has sung with the Randazzo Opera in London, in a wide range of roles including the title rôle in 'The Marriage of Figaro', *Dr Malatesta* in 'Don Pasquale', *Dr Miracle* in 'The Tales of Hoffmann' and *Falke* and *Frosch* in 'Die Fledermaus'. Robert also sings with Birmingham Savoyards and was most recently seen as *Florian* in their production of 'Princess Ida'.

VALERIE MATTHEWS (Annina)

Valerie studied at the Royal College of Music, London and joined Midland Music Makers after moving to Birmingham. She has taken many lead rôles including *Maliela* in 'Jewels of the Madonna' and *Alison* in 'The Wandering Scholar'. She is one of the founder members of the CBSO Chorus and has sung the soprano solo in their Brahms Requiem and the minor solo in Szymanowski's 'King Roger'. Valerie was a participant in a Masterclass given by Robert Tear. She sang the soprano solo in St Chad's Cathedral for 'Messiah' in aid of BBC's 'Round the World Messiah'. Valerie played the part of *Giannetta* in MMM's 2001 production of 'L'Elisir d'Amore'.

DAVID MELLOR (Doctor Grenvil)

David has sung in every MMM production since 1985. Solo roles include *Betto* in 'Gianni Schicchi', *Micha* and *Krusina* in 'The Bartered Bride', *Balthazar* in 'Amahl', *Zuane* in 'La Gioconda' and *Jobard* in 'Aunt Caroline's Will'. He sang his current rôle in the English Touring Opera Summer School's production of 'La Traviata' this summer, his third year at the school. He has also been a member of Royal Sutton Opera since 1981, where roles include *Zuniga* in 'Carmen', the *High Priest of Baal* in 'Nabucco', *Simone* in 'Gianni Schicchi', *Monterone* in 'Rigoletto', the *Marquis of Calatrava* in 'The Force of Destiny', *Zaretsky* in 'Eugene Onegin' and the *Mandarin* in 'Turandot'.

PAT MORRIS (Producer)

Pat is a graduate in Opera Studies from Rose Bruford College and has recently completed post-graduate diplomas in History of Art and Design and Textile Design with the University of Central England. She has produced for local amateur theatre for more than thirty years during which time she has written and produced most of the major pantomime titles, produced a number of dramas and musical shows including 'Oliver' and 'Wizard of Oz' for Cincinnati Theatre Company, and 'Finians Rainbow', 'The Music Man', and 'Orpheus in the Underworld' for Dunlop Operatic Society. Recently she has produced and directed 'I Pagliacci' and 'The Bartered Bride' for Midland Music Makers.

RICHARD OWEN (Alfredo Germont)

Richard hails originally from North Wales but has lived in Sutton Coldfield for a number of years. He gained his BA (Hons) in Fine Art and worked for Birmingham Social Services Department as an Art Therapist for many years. He later studied at Birmingham Conservatoire and Trinity College of Music, London. He has worked as a staff singer at the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, and for Oper Frankfurt, Germany. His professional roles include the title rôle in Verdi's 'Otello', *Calaf* in 'Turandot', *Rodolfo* in 'La Bohème', *Don Jose* in 'Carmen' and *Cavaradossi* in 'Tosca'. Richard has an active concert and oratorio schedule in works ranging from Verdi's 'Requiem' to Handel's 'Messiah'. He also created the rôle of *Jack Sheppard* in 'Joe Carpenter and Son' for the BBC.

JOHN READ (Marquis d'Obigny)

John has been performing in plays, operas and concerts for more than forty years. During that time, as a keen singer, he has appeared in major roles for Solihull Operatic Society. *Joe* in 'Showboat' and *Wilfred* in 'Yeomen of the Guard'. With St Alphege Operatic Society he has performed as *Danilo* in 'The Merry Widow' and with Moseley Operatic Society as *Giusseppe* in 'The Gondoliers'. He has also had supporting roles in 'La Bohème' & 'Samson & Delilah' with Royal Sutton Opera. He is very happy to be taking this rôle with Midland Music Makers.

LYNDA SHEPHERD (Flora Bervoix)

Lynda Shepherd was born in Birmingham, and started singing opera at school. After a short interlude in light musicals, she decided that grand opera was for her. Since that time she has played leading roles in over 25 different operas with Midland Music Makers, Royal Sutton Opera, and Consensus.

Midland Music Makers
Opera

events

Many thanks to you all for keeping the spirit of Midlands Music Makers alive. We hope you've enjoyed the evening as much as we have, and will join us as we embrace our 2003 programme.

- | | |
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| December 14th 2002 | Winter Concert
St. Michael's Church, Boldmere |
| January 9th 2003 | Friends' Evening
Clarendon Suites. |
| April 4th & 5th 2003 | Spring concert
The Friends Meeting House, Bournville |
| 30th September
to 4th October. 2003 | Main Opera Production (TBC)
The Crescent Theatre, Brindleyplace |

www.midlandmusicmakers.org

Further 2003 concert dates yet to be confirmed, as previous years. So look out for our publicity leaflets in libraries, arts centres and music shops or visit our web site.

Our policy is one of continuous recruitment in all sections, and singers who are interested in joining us for any of the above events are invited to use the form on the back cover of the programme or call the New Members' Rep. Lorraine Payne on 01384 374 531

MAIN INTERVAL: Refreshments will be served in the foyer during the first interval. The Promenade Bar will be open before and after the performance and during the interval. Patrons requiring drinks during the interval and particularly at the end of the performance are urged to order them in advance. Smoking is not permitted in the auditorium. Neither is the use of cameras and tape recorders. First aid facilities are provided by St John's Ambulance which gives its services voluntarily. In accordance with the requirement of the licensing justices: a) The public may leave at the end of the performance by all exits and entrances other than those used as queue waiting rooms and the doors of all such exits and entrances shall at all times be open. b) All gangways, passages, and staircases shall be kept entirely free from chairs or other obstruction. c) Persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the intersecting gangways. If standing be permitted at the rear of the seating, sufficient space shall be left for persons to pass easily to and fro.

THE CRESCENT THEATRE Licensee and Manager Ian Craddock

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keep up with Midland Music Makers'
news, events and information.

www.midlandmusicmakers.org

MMM's new web site is constantly changing
and adding new information. Visit our site
regularly to find out what's going on.



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The Midland Music Makers are grateful to all the Friends listed above for their continued support, which helps us to continue our annual opera performances in spite of the ever-increasing costs. We shall be delighted to welcome new Friends and if you have enjoyed this evening and would like to become more closely associated with our efforts, please write to our President, Dr Arthur Street, 17 Maplebeck Court, Lode Lane, Solihull, B91 2UB. Alternatively, fill out the appropriate section overleaf and hand it to one of our stewards. To become a Friend you promise to donate not less than £5 per person per annum. (Arthur will send you annual reminders). Friends receive prior notice of our opera performances and concerts. Also we arrange a special social evening and concert to which all Friends are invited. The next Friends' Evening will be held on Thursday 9th January 2003.

Midland Music Makers
Opera

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Midland Music Makers is a friendly, exciting and growing society. Here are some of the ways you can play a part. Fill in the section most appropriate to you, and hand it to one of our stewards. Alternatively, post to Midland Music Makers at West View, South Avenue, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY8 3XY

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My voice range is: Soprano / Contralto / Tenor / Bass / Not quite sure.

(Children under 16 must have the permission of a parent / guardian)

I would like to take part in a non-singing rôle.

(In virtually every opera we require villagers, peasants, soldiers, children and general onlookers of all ages

- go on, try it, you may uncover secret thespian leanings)

I'm sure I could do something backstage: painting, scenery changes, design etc.

(You don't have to be Leonardo to help Kate produce her excellent designs)

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(see overleaf for details)

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Signed

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