

RIGOLETTO

by Giuseppe Verdi

Cast

The DUKE OF MANTUA (tenor)
RIGOLETTO, his court jester (baritone)
GILDA, his daughter (soprano)
SPARAFUCILE, a villain (bass)
MADDALENA, his sister (contralto)
GIOVANNA, Gilda's duenna (mezzo-soprano)
The COUNT OF MONTERONE (baritone)
MARULLO, a nobleman (baritone)
MATTEO BORSA, a courtier (tenor)
The COUNT OF CEPRANO (bass)
The COUNTESS, his wife (mezzo-soprano)
COURT USHER (tenor)
PAGE OF THE DUCHESS (mezzo-soprano)
gentlemen of the court, ladies, pages, halberdiers

ACT ONE

No. 1 — Prelude

SCENE ONE

A magnificent hall in the Ducal Palace, Mantua. Doors at the far end lead to other rooms; all are splendidly illuminated and thronged with a courtly company of knights and ladies in rich attire. Pages pass to and fro. The merrymaking is at its height. From within, the sound of music. The Duke and Borsa emerge from a door at the far end.

No. 2 — Introduction

DUKE

I intend to clinch my affair
with that nameless beauty of the
bourgeoisie.

BORSA

The girl you've seen in church?

DUKE

Every feast-day for the past three months.

BORSA

Where does she live?

DUKE

In a quiet back alley;
a mysterious man goes there every night.

BORSA

And does she know
who her admirer is?

DUKE

No, she doesn't.

*A group of ladies with their cavaliers cross
the room.*

BORSA

What a bunch of beauties! Look at them!

DUKE

But Ceprano's wife beats them all.

BORSA

Don't let the Count hear you, my lord!

DUKE
What do I care?

BORSA
He might tell another woman.

DUKE
That wouldn't worry me at all.

Neither is any different
from the rest I see around me;
I never yield my heart
to one beauty more than another.
Feminine charm is a gift bestowed
by fate to brighten our lives.
And if one woman pleases me today,
tomorrow, like as not, another will.
Fidelity? that tyrant of the heart -
we shun like pestilence.
Only those who want to should be faithful;
without freedom there is no love.
I find the ravings of jealous husbands
and the frenzy of lovers ridiculous;
once smitten by a pretty face
I'd not let Argus' hundred eyes deter me!

*Count Ceprano enters and, from a distance,
watches his wife who is on the arm of another
man; more ladies and gentlemen enter.*

DUKE
*to Ceprano's wife, greeting her with great
gallantry*
You are leaving us? How cruel!

COUNTESS CEPRANO
I must go with my husband
to Ceprano.

DUKE
So bright a star should be shedding
its brilliance on my court.
You would make every heart beat faster
here.
The fires of passion already flare
headily, conquering, consuming my heart.

COUNTESS
Calm yourself!

*The Duke gives her his arm and leads her
out.
Rigoletto meets Ceprano, then the courtiers.*

RIGOLETTO
What have you on your head,
my lord of Ceprano?
*Ceprano reacts with an angry gesture, then
follows his wife and the Duke. Rigoletto says
to the courtiers.*
He's fuming, did you see?

BORSA, CHORUS
What sport!

RIGOLETTO
Oh, yes!

BORSA, CHORUS
The Duke is enjoying himself!

RIGOLETTO
Doesn't he always? That's nothing new.

Gaming and wine, parties, dancing,
battles and banquets ? anything goes.
Now he's laying siege to the Countess
while her husband goes off in a rage.

*He leaves the room. Marullo enters
excitedly.*

MARULLO
Great news! Great news!

CHORUS
What has happened? Tell us!

MARULLO
This will amaze you!

BORSA, CHORUS
Tell us, tell us.

MARULLO
Ah! Ah! Rigoletto...

BORSA, CHORUS
Well?

MARULLO
Against all the odds...

BORSA, CHORUS
He's lost his hump?
He's no longer a monster?

MARULLO
Even more extraordinary! The fool has ...

BORSA, CHORUS
Has what?

MARULLO
A mistress!

BORSA, CHORUS
A mistress! Who'd ever believe it?

MARULLO
The hunchback has changed into Cupid.

BORSA, CHORUS
That monster? Cupid?...
Some Cupid!

MARULLO
Some Cupid!

*The Duke returns followed by Rigoletto,
then Ceprano.*

DUKE
to Rigoletto
Ah, no one is such a bore as Ceprano!
And his dear wife is an angel!

RIGOLETTO
Carry her off.

DUKE
Easy to say; but how?

RIGOLETTO
Tonight.

DUKE
Have you forgotten the Count?

RIGOLETTO
What about prison?

DUKE
Ah, no.

RIGOLETTO
Well, banish him, then.

DUKE
Not that either, fool.

RIGOLETTO
Well then, his head...

making gestures of cutting it off

CEPRANO
(The black-hearted villain!)

DUKE
clapping the Count on the shoulder
What, this head?

RIGOLETTO
Naturally.
What else can you do with such a head?...
What's it good for?

CEPRANO
furiously, drawing his sword
Scoundrel!

DUKE
to Ceprano
That's enough!

RIGOLETTO
He makes me laugh.

BORSA, MARULLO, CHORUS
(He's furious!)

DUKE
to Rigoletto
Fool, come here.
You always take a joke too far.
The wrath you provoke could rebound upon
you.

CEPRANO

to the courtiers

Revenge on the fool! Which of us nurses
no grudge against him? Revenge!

RIGOLETTO

Who could harm me? I'm not afraid of
them.

No one dare touch a favourite of the Duke.

BORSA, MARULLO, CHORUS

to Ceprano

But how?

CEPRANO

Let those with spirit come armed
to my house tomorrow. After dark.

BORSA, MARULLO, CHORUS

Yes! Agreed.

RIGOLETTO

Who could harm me? etc.

DUKE

Ah, you always take a joke, etc.

BORSA, CEPRANO, MARULLO,
CHORUS

Revenge on the fool! Which of us nurses
no grudge against him for his cruel ways?
Yes, revenge! etc.

DUKE, RIGOLETTO

What gaiety! What a party spirit!

The dancers swirl into the room.

ALL

What gaiety! What party spirit!
What splendid entertainment!
Oh, just look, would you not say
that this was the realm of pleasure?

Enter Count Monterone.

MONTERONE

Let me speak to him.

DUKE

No!

MONTERONE

coming forward

I shall!

BORSA, RIGOLETTO, MARULLO,
CEPRANO, CHORUS

Monterone!

MONTERONE

fixing the Duke with a look of fearless pride

Yes, Monterone. My voice, like thunder,
shall make you quake wherever you go...

RIGOLETTO

to the Duke, imitating Monterone

Let me speak to him.

advancing with mock?solemnity

You did conspire against us, my lord,
and we, with royal clemency, forgave you.
What mad impulse is this, that night and day
you make complaint about your daughter's
honour?

MONTERONE

regarding Rigoletto with angry contempt

One more insult!

to the Duke

Ah yes! I shall disrupt
your orgies; I shall come here to complain
so long as the atrocious insult
to my family remains unpunished.
And if you give me over to your hangman,
I shall haunt you as a terrifying spectre,
carrying my skull in my hands,
crying to God and man for vengeance!

DUKE

Enough! Arrest him.

RIGOLETTO

He's mad.

CHORUS

What audacity!

MONTERONE
to the Duke and Rigoletto
 May both of you be damned!

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
 CHORUS
 Ah!

MONTERONE
 To unleash your hounds on a dying lion
 is cowardly, o Duke.
to Rigoletto
 and you, you serpent,
 you who ridicule a father's grief,
 my curse upon you!

RIGOLETTO
horror?struck
 (What has he said! Horror!)

DUKE, BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
 CHORUS
to Monterone
 O you who so daringly disrupt our revels,
 some demon from hell must have guided
 you here;
 no words will avail you, begone from this
 place,
 go, greybeard, beware of your sovereign's
 wrath, etc.
 You have provoked it, all hope is lost,
 this was a fatal mistake on your part.

RIGOLETTO
 (Horror! What horror! etc.)

MONTERONE
 My curse upon you! And you, you serpent!
 etc.

*Monterone goes out between two
 Halberdiers.
 The others all follow the Duke into an
 adjoining room.*

*The end of a cul-de-sac. Left, a modest house
 with a small courtyard enclosed by walls. In
 the courtyard, a large tree with a marble
 bench beside it; a door in the wall opens on
 to the street. Above the wall, a terrace over a
 loggia. From the second storey a door opens
 on to the terrace, which is reached by a flight
 of steps in front. To the right of the road, a
 much higher wall surrounding the garden
 and one side of the Ceprano palace. It is
 night. Rigoletto enters, wrapped in a cloak.
 Sparafucile, a long sword beneath his cloak,
 follows him.*

No. 3 — Duet

RIGOLETTO
 (The old man cursed me!)

SPARAFUCILE
 Signor? ...

RIGOLETTO
 Go ? I have nothing.

SPARAFUCILE
 And I asked for nothing. You see before you
 a swordsman.

RIGOLETTO
 A robber?

SPARAFUCILE
 One who can rid you,
 for a small fee, of a rival,
 which you have.

RIGOLETTO
 Who?

SPARAFUCILE
 Your woman lives there.

RIGOLETTO
 (What's this I) And how much
 would you charge me for a nobleman?

SPARAFUCILE
 I'd demand a higher price.

SCENE 2

RIGOLETTO
How are you usually paid?

SPARAFUCILE
Half in advance,
the rest on completion.

RIGOLETTO
(The demon!) And how is it
that you can work so safely?

SPARAFUCILE
I either kill in the town
or under my own roof.
I wait for my man at night;
one thrust and he dies.

RIGOLETTO
(The demon!) And how do you work at
home?

SPARAFUCILE
It's simple.
My sister helps me.
She dances in the streets... she's pretty ...
she entices the victim, and then...

RIGOLETTO
I understand.

SPARAFUCILE
Without a sound...
This is my instrument.
indicating his sword
Can it serve you?

RIGOLETTO
No... not just now.

SPARAFUCILE
You'll regret it.

RIGOLETTO
Who knows?

SPARAFUCILE
My name is Sparafucile.

RIGOLETTO
A foreigner?

SPARAFUCILE
as he leaves
Burgundian.

RIGOLETTO
And where, if the need should arise?

SPARAFUCILE
Here, each night.

RIGOLETTO
Go!

SPARAFUCILE
Sparafucile.

He leaves.

No. 4 — Scena and Duet

RIGOLETTO
his gaze following Sparafucile
We are two of a kind:
my weapon is my tongue, his is a dagger;
I am a man of laughter, he strikes the fatal
blow!
The old man cursed me ...
O mankind! O nature!
It was you who made me evil and corrupt!
I rage at my monstrous form, my cap and
bells!
To be permitted nothing but to laugh!
I'm denied that common human right, to
weep ...
My master,
young, carefree, so powerful, so handsome,
half-dozing, says:
"Fool, make me laugh!"
And I must contrive to do it! Oh, damnation!
My hate upon you, sneering courtiers!
How I enjoy snapping at your heels!
If I am wicked, the fault is yours alone.
But here I become another person!
The old man cursed me!... Why should this
thought still prey so on my mind?
Will some disaster befall me? Ah no, this is

folly!

He opens the gate with a key and enters the courtyard.

Gilda runs from the house and into his arms.
My daughter!

GILDA
Father!

RIGOLETTO
Only with you
does my heavy heart find joy.

GILDA
Oh, how loving you are, father!

RIGOLETTO
You are my life!
Without you, what would I have on earth?
Ah, my daughter!

GILDA
You sigh! What makes you so sad?
Tell your poor daughter.
If you have secrets, share them with her:
let her know about her family.

RIGOLETTO
You have no family.

GILDA
What is your name?

RIGOLETTO
What does it matter?

GILDA
If you are unwilling
to tell me about yourself...

RIGOLETTO
interrupting
Never leave this house.

GILDA
I only go out to church.

RIGOLETTO
Oh, that is good.

GILDA
If you will tell me nothing of yourself,
let me know at least who my mother was.

RIGOLETTO
Oh, do not speak to your wretched
father of his lost love.
She felt, that angel,
pity for my sorrows.
I was alone, deformed, poor,
and she loved me out of compassion.
She died... may the earth rest lightly
upon that beloved head.
Only you are left to this wretch...
O God, I thank thee for that!

GILDA
sobbing
What sorrow! What can have caused
such bitter tears?
Father, no more, calm down.
This sight tortures me.
Tell me your name, tell me
what sorrow so afflicts you.

RIGOLETTO
What good would it do? None at all!
I am your father, let that suffice.
Perhaps some people fear me,
and some may even hate me.
Others curse me ...

GILDA
Country, family, friends,
have you none of these?

RIGOLETTO
Country! family! friends!
My faith, my family, my country,
my whole world is in you!

GILDA
Ah, if I can make you happy,
then I shall be content!

I have been here for three months now,
yet I have never seen the town:
if you would let me, now I could...

RIGOLETTO

Never! Never! Tell me, have you been out?

GILDA

No.

RIGOLETTO

Woe betide you!

GILDA

(What have I said?)

RIGOLETTO

Make sure you never do!

(They could follow her, carry her off!

Here, the dishonoring of a jester's daughter
would be cause for laughter.. Oh, horror!)

towards the house

Hola?

Giovanna comes out of the house.

GIOVANNA

Signor?

RIGOLETTO

Does anyone see me come in?

Mind you tell me the truth.

GIOVANNA

Ah no, no one.

RIGOLETTO

Good. Is the gate to the street
always kept locked?

GIOVANNA

Yes, always.

RIGOLETTO

Mind you tell me the truth.

O woman, watch over this flower
entrusted, pure, to your keeping;
be vigilant, that nothing may ever
sully its purity.

From the fury of the winds
that have broken other flowers,
protect her, and unstained
restore her to her father.

GILDA

What affection! What concern!

What do you fear, my father?

In heaven above, at God's right hand,
an angel watches over us.

We are shielded from all harm

by my mother's blessed prayers.

No hand will ever pluck or crush
this flower so dear to you.

*The Duke, dressed as a commoner, appears
in the street.*

RIGOLETTO

O woman, watch over this flower,
entrusted pure, to your..

There is someone outside!

*He opens the gate and, as he goes out into
the street, the Duke slips into the courtyard
and hides behind the tree, throwing a purse
to Giovanna to ensure her silence.*

GILDA

Dear God!

Always some new suspicion!

RIGOLETTO

returning, to Giovanna

Has anyone ever followed you to church?

GIOVANNA

Never.

DUKE

(Rigoletto!)

RIGOLETTO

If anyone ever knocks,
mind you don't open the gate.

GIOVANNA

Not even for the Duke?

RIGOLETTO

Especially not for him.
My daughter, good night.

DUKE
(His daughter!)

GILDA
Good night, father.

RIGOLETTO
O woman, watch over this flower, *etc.*
My daughter, good night!

GILDA
What affection, *etc.*
Good night, father.

*They embrace and Rigoletto departs closing
the gate behind him;
Gilda, Giovanna and the Duke remain in the
courtyard.*

No. 5 — Scena and Duet

GILDA
Giovanna, I am ashamed...

GIOVANNA
Whatever for?

GILDA
I said nothing of the youth
who followed us to church.

GIOVANNA
Why tell him? Do you dislike
this young man, then?

GILDA
No, no, he is too handsome
and I could be tempted to love him.

GIOVANNA
And he seems generous, a fine gentleman.

GILDA
I hope he's not a gentleman or a prince;
I think I should love him more if he were
poor.
Sleeping and waking, I call to him,
and my soul in ecstasy cries: I lo...

DUKE
*Rushing out and waving Giovanna away, he
kneels before Gilda and finishes the
sentence for her.*

I love you!
I love you! Speak those dear words once
more
and a heaven of joy will open before me!

GILDA
Giovanna? Alas! There is no one here
to answer me! Oh, God! No one?

DUKE
I am here, and my very soul answers you.
Ah, two who love are a world in themselves!

GILDA
Who, whoever brought you here to me?

DUKE
Whether angel or devil, what does it matter?
I love you!

GILDA
Leave me.

DUKE
Leave you?... Now?...
Now that both of us burn with a single fire!
Ah, the god of love has bound
our destinies together, inseparably!

Love is the sunshine of the soul, 'tis life
itself!
Its voice is the beating of our hearts.
Fame and glory, power and thrones,
are but fragile, earthbound things beside it.
One thing alone is unique, divine:
'tis love that bears us heavenwards!
So let us love, my angel?woman;
you would make me the envy of all
mankind.

GILDA
(Ah, these are the tender, longed?for words
I have heard in my maiden dreams!)

DUKE
You love me, say it once again.

GILDA
You eavesdropped...

DUKE
How happy you've made me!

GILDA
Tell me your name...
Am I permitted to know it?

Ceprano and Borsa appear in the street below.

CEPRANO
to Borsa
This is the place.

DUKE
racking his brains
My name is ...

BORSA
to Ceprano
Good.

He and Ceprano leave.

DUKE
Walter Maldè.
I am a student, and poor...

GIOVANNA
returning in a state of alarm
I can hear footsteps outside!

GILDA
My father, perhaps...

DUKE
(Ah, if I should catch
the traitor
who cost me such a chance!)

GILDA
to Giovanna

Show him out
through the garden gate... Go now

DUKE
Tell Me, will you love me?

GILDA
And you?

DUKE
For the rest of my life... then...

GILDA
No more, no more ... you must go.

TOGETHER
Farewell... my heart and soul
are set on you alone.
Farewell ... my love for you
will last for ever.

*He leaves, escorted by Giovanna.
Gilda stands watching the gate through
which he disappeared.*

No. 6 — Aria

GILDA
Walter Maldè... name of the man I love,
be thou engraved upon my lovesick heart!

Beloved name, the first to move
the pulse of love within my heart,
thou shalt remind me ever
of the delights of love!
In my thoughts, my desire
will ever fly to thee,
and my last breath of life
shall be, beloved name, of thee.
*Taking a lantern, she walks up the steps to
the terrace.*
Walter Maldè!

*Meanwhile, Marullo, Ceprano, Borsa and
other courtiers have appeared in the road,
armed and masked, they watch Gilda as she
enters the house.*

Beloved name, etc.

BORSA
There she is.

CEPRANO
Look at her!

CHORUS
Oh, isn't she lovely!

MARULLO
She looks like a fairy or an angel.

CHORUS
So that's Rigoletto's
mistress!

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
CHORUS
Oh, isn't she lovely!

Rigoletto enters with a preoccupied air.

No. 7 — First Finale

RIGOLETTO
(I've come back!... Why?)

BORSA
Silence. To work, now ...do as I say.

RIGOLETTO
(Ah, I was cursed by that man!)
brushing against Borsa
Who's there?

BORSA
to his companions
Quiet... It's Rigoletto.

CEPRANO
A double victory! We'll kill him.

BORSA
No, tomorrow the jest will be even better.

MARULLO
Leave this to me...

RIGOLETTO
Who is that speaking?

MARULLO
Eh, Rigoletto?... Is that you?

RIGOLETTO
Who is that?

MARULLO
Eh, don't snap our heads off! This is...

RIGOLETTO
Who?

MARULLO
Marullo.

RIGOLETTO
It's so dark I can't see a thing.

MARULLO
We're here for a prank...
We're going to carry off Ceprano's wife.

RIGOLETTO
(Ah, I can breathe again!)
How can you get in?

MARULLO
to Ceprano
Your key!
to Rigoletto
Don't worry.
We've got it all arranged...
giving him Ceprano's key
Here is the key.

RIGOLETTO
feeling it
I can feel its crest.
(Ah, my terror was unfounded!)
This is his place. I'm with you.

MARULLO
We're masked...

RIGOLETTO
Then I should be too.
Give me a mask.

MARULLO

Fine, it's right here.

He puts a mask on Rigoletto, at the same time blindfolding him with a handkerchief, then positions him by a ladder which the others have leant against the terrace.

You shall hold the ladder.

RIGOLETTO

It's dark as pitch.

MARULLO

The cloth has stopped his eyes and ears.

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
CHORUS

Softly, softly, the trap is closing;
now we shall catch him, all unsuspecting.
The mocker so insolent, so unremitting,
will soon be a butt of derision himself!
Stealthily, stealthily we'll kidnap his
mistress,
and in the morning the whole Court will
laugh!
Stealthily, stealthily, *etc.*
The mocker so insolent, *etc.*
Softly... stealthily ...to work.

Some of the men climb up to the terrace, force the door, open the gate from the inside to admit the others, then emerge dragging Gilda, gagged with a handkerchief. As she is carried off she drops a scarf.

GILDA

from afar
Help, father!

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
CHORUS

in the distance
Victory!

GILDA

from further away
Help!

RIGOLETTO

They haven't finished yet! ...A good joke this!

touching his eyes

I'm blindfolded!... Gilda!

He tears off the mask and the blindfold. By the light of a lantern left by Marullo's men, he sees Gilda's scarf, then the open gate. Rushing into the courtyard, he drags out the terrified Giovanna and stares at her, stupefied, speechless, he tears his hair. Finally, after a great struggle, he cries out.

Ah, the curse!

He faints.

ACT TWO

A room in the ducal palace. There is a door on each side and a larger one at the far end flanked by full-length portraits of the Duke and his wife. A high-backed chair stands near a velvet covered table and other furniture.

No. 8 — Scena and Aria

DUKE

entering, agitated
She has been stolen from me!
When, O heaven? In those few moments,
before some inner voice
made me hastily retrace my steps!
The gate was open, the house deserted!
And where is she now, that dear angel?
She who first kindled my heart
with the flame of a constant affection?

So pure that her modest demeanour
almost convinced me to lead a virtuous life!
She has been stolen from me!
And who dared do this? ... But I shall be
avenged.
The tears of my beloved demand it.

I seem to see the tears
 coursing from her eyes
 as, bewildered and afraid
 at the surprise attack,
 remembering our love,
 she called her Walter's name.
 But could not defend you,
 sweet, beloved maid;
 he who would pledge his very soul
 to bring you happiness;
 he who, in loving you, envied
 not even the angels.

*Marullo, Ceprano, Borsa and other
 courtiers enter.*

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
 CHORUS
 My lord, my lord!

DUKE
 What is it?

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
 CHORUS
 Rigoletto's mistress
 has been carried off.

DUKE
 What? From where?

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
 CHORUS
 From his house.

DUKE
 Ah! ah! Tell me, how was it done?

He sits down.

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
 CHORUS
 Together we went at nightfall,
 to a street on the edge of the town;
 there, as we had foreseen,
 we found a most beautiful girl.
 It was Rigoletto's paramour,
 but as soon as we saw her, she vanished.
 Our plans to abduct her were ready,

when along came the jester himself,
 whom we convinced, the simpleton,
 that we were after Ceprano's countess.
 So once we had set up the ladder,
 he, blindfolded, held it secure.
 We climbed up and in less than no time
 had carried the young girl away.
 When he realized how we'd paid him out,
 you should have heard him curse!

DUKE
 (Heavens! It's her, my beloved!)
to the Chorus
 But where is the poor girl now?

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
 CHORUS
 We brought her here ourselves.

DUKE
 (Ah, heaven has not stolen everything from
 me!)
joyfully, rising
 (Mighty love calls me,
 and I to her must fly:
 I would give my crown
 to console her heart.
 Ah, she shall know at last who loves her
 and learn who I really am:
 she shall learn that Love counts
 among his slaves even those on thrones.)

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
 CHORUS
 Oh, what thought now excites him?
 How his mood has changed!

*The Duke hurries of through the center
 door. Rigoletto enters, humming to himself
 and trying to disguise his grief.*

No. 9 — Scena and Aria

MARULLO
 Poor Rigoletto!

RIGOLETTO
 La ra, la ra, la la...

CHORUS

Here he comes!... Be silent!

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,

CHORUS

Good morning, Rigoletto.

RIGOLETTO

(They were all in on it!)

CEPRANO

What news, jester?

RIGOLETTO

What news, jester?

Only that you are more of a bore than usual.

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,

CHORUS

Ha! ha! ha!

RIGOLETTO

La ra, la ra, la la...

restlessly searching everywhere

(Where can they have hidden her?...

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,

CHORUS

(See how upset he is!)

RIGOLETTO

La ra, la ra, la la ...

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,

CHORUS

(Yes! See how upset he is!)

RIGOLETTO

to Marullo

I am glad

that the cold air last night

did not harm you in the least...

MARULLO

Last night!...

RIGOLETTO

Yes! ... Ah! it was a fine trick!

MARULLO

But I was asleep all night!

RIGOLETTO

Ah, you were asleep! So I dreamed it!

La ra, la ra, la la ...

He moves off. Seeing a handkerchief on the table, he examines the monogram agitatedly.

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,

CHORUS

(See how he inspects everything!)

RIGOLETTO

throwing down the handkerchief

(It isn't hers.)

Is the Duke still asleep?

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,

CHORUS

Yes, he is still asleep.

One of the Duchess's pages enters.

PAGE

The Duchess wishes to speak to the Duke.

CEPRANO

He's asleep.

PAGE

Wasn't he here with you just now?

BORSA

He went hunting.

PAGE

Without his escort! Unarmed!

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,

CHORUS

Don't you understand

that he can't see anyone right now?

RIGOLETTO

standing apart, he has followed the conversation attentively, and now leaps

among them, crying out:
Ah, she is there, then! She is with the Duke!

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
CHORUS
Who?

RIGOLETTO
The girl you carried off
from my house last night.
But I shall get her back... She's in there!

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
CHORUS
If you've mislaid your mistress, look for her
elsewhere.

RIGOLETTO
I want my daughter!

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
CHORUS
His daughter!

RIGOLETTO
Yes, my daughter! After such a sweet
revenge,
what? You're not laughing?
She's in there... I want her... Give her back.

*running towards the center door, but finding
it barred by the courtiers*

Courtiers, vile, damnable rabble,
how much were you paid for my treasure?
There's nothing you won't do for money,
but my daughter is beyond any price.
Give her back ... or this hand, though
unarmed,
will prove a dread weapon indeed.
A man will fear nothing on earth
when defending his children's honor.
Assassins, open that door!

*He again attacks the door, is dragged away
from it by the courtiers, struggles awhile,
then gives up, exhausted.*

Ah! You're all against me!
weeping
All against me!
Then I'll weep. Marullo, my lord,
you whose soul is as gentle as your heart,
tell me, where have they hidden her?
She's in there ... isn't she? You don't
answer...
Alas! My lords, forgive me, have pity!
Give an old man back his daughter!
To give her back can cost you nothing now,
but to me my daughter is everything.
Lords, forgive me ...
Give me my daughter back,
to me my daughter is everything.
Lords, forgive me.

*Gilda suddenly runs from the room on the
left and throws herself into her father's
arms.*

No. 10 — Scena and Duet

GILDA
Father!

RIGOLETTO
Oh, God! My Gilda!
Sirs, she is all
the family I have ... Don't be afraid now,
my angel child
to the courtiers
It was only a joke wasn't it?
I, though I wept before, now laugh.
to Gilda
Why do you still weep?

GILDA
The shame, father!

RIGOLETTO
Good God! What do you mean?

GILDA
To you alone I confess...

RIGOLETTO
to the courtiers
Off with u, all of you!

And if your Duke should dare approach,
tell him not to enter, tell him I am here.

sinks into the chair

BORSA, MARULLO, CEPRANO,
CHORUS

(With children and with madmen,
pretense is often best.
We'll leave, but still keep watch
to see what he may do.)

They go out through the center and shut the door.

RIGOLETTO
Speak... we are alone.

GILDA
(O Heaven, give me courage!)

Each holy day, in church,
as I prayed to God,
a fatally handsome young man
stood where I could see him...
Though our lips were silent,
our hearts spoke through our eyes.
Furtively, only last night he came
to meet me for the first time.
I am a student and poor,"
he said so tenderly,
and with passionate fervour
told me of his love.
He went... my heart was rapt
in the sweetest dreams,
when suddenly the men broke in
who carried me away;
they brought me here by force,
cruelly afraid.

RIGOLETTO
(Ah! I asked infamy, O God,
only for myself,
so that she might be raised
as high as I had fallen.
Ah, beside the gallows
one must raise an altar!
But all is now lost,
the altar is cast down!)

Weep, my child, and let your tears
fall upon my breast.

GILDA
Father, an angel speaks through you
and consoles me.

RIGOLETTO
When I have finished what I must do here,
we can leave this house of doom.

GILDA
Yes.

RIGOLETTO
(A single day has changed everything!)

Preceded by an usher, Count Monterone enters between two halberdiers and crosses the back of the room.

USHER
Open up: Monterone is to go to the dungeon.

MONTERONE
halting before the Duke's portrait
Since my curse has been in vain,
and neither steel nor thunderbolt has struck
your breast, you will live on, o Duke, in
happiness.

He goes out through the center between the guards.

RIGOLETTO
No, old man, you're wrong ... you shall be
avenged.
passionately addressing the portrait
Yes, revenge, terrible revenge is all that my
heart desires.
The hour of your punishment hastens on,
that hour which will be your last.
Like a thunderbolt from the hand of God,
the jester's revenge shall strike you down.

GILDA
O my father, what a fierce joy
flashes in your eyes!
Forgive him: and then we too may hear

the voice of pardon from Heaven.
Forgive him!

RIGOLETTO
Revenge! Revenge! No! No!

GILDA
(He betrayed me, yet I love him; great God,
I ask for pity on this faithless man!)

RIGOLETTO
Like a thunderbolt, *etc.*

GILDA
Forgive him, *etc.*

They leave through the main door.

ACT THREE

The right bank of the River Mincio. On the left is a two-storied house, half fallen into ruin. At ground level, beyond an arcade, the interior of a rustic wineshop can be seen and a rough stone staircase leading to a loft with a small bed which, since there are no shutters, is in full view. Downstairs, in the wall facing the road, is a door that opens inwards. The wall itself is so full of cracks and holes here that whatever takes place within is clearly visible. In the background are the deserted fields along the Mincio, which runs behind a crumbling parapet. Beyond the river lies Mantua

It is night. Gilda and Rigoletto, both ill at ease, are standing in the road; Sparafucile is seated at a table in the wine shop.

No. 11 — Scena and Canzone

RIGOLETTO
And you love him?

GILDA
I always will.

RIGOLETTO
Yet I have given you time to forget.

GILDA
I love him.

RIGOLETTO
Poor woman's heart! Ah, the scoundrel!
You shall be avenged, o Gilda.

GILDA
Have pity, my father!

RIGOLETTO
And if you were sure
of his lack of faith, would you still love
him?

GILDA
I do not know, but he adores me.

RIGOLETTO
He does?

GILDA
Yes.

RIGOLETTO
Well then, just watch.

He leads her to a crack in the wall. She looks through into the wine shop.

GILDA
I see a man.

RIGOLETTO
Wait a moment.

The Duke, wearing the uniform of a cavalry officer, enters the wineshop through a door on the left.

GILDA
startled
Ah, father!

DUKE
to Sparafucile

Two things
and quickly..

SPARAFUCILE
What things?

DUKE
A room and a bottle of wine!

RIGOLETTO
(These are the fellow's habits.)

SPARAFUCILE
(Oh, the gay blade!)

He goes into an adjoining room.

DUKE
Women are as fickle
as feathers in the wind,
simple in speech,
and simple in mind.
Always the loveable,
sweet, laughing face,
but laughing or crying,
the face is false for sure.

If you rely on her
you will regret it,
and if you trust her
you are undone!
Yet none can call himself
fully contented
who has not tasted
love in her arms!

Women are as fickle, *etc.*

Sparafucile returns with a bottle of wine and two glasses, which he puts on the table; then he strikes the ceiling twice with the pommel of his sword. At this signal, a buxom young woman in gypsy costume comes jumping down the stairs. The Duke runs to kiss her, but she eludes him. Meanwhile, Sparafucile, having slipped out into the road, speaks softly to Rigoletto:

SPARAFUCILE
Your man's in there. Is he to live or die?

RIGOLETTO
I'll come back later to conclude our business.

Sparafucile moves off behind the house in the direction of the river.

No. 12 — Quartet

DUKE
One day, if I remember rightly,
my pretty one, I met you...
I asked someone about you
and was told that you live here.
Let me say that ever since,
my heart has been yours alone.

GILDA
(Deceiver!)

MADDALENA
Ah! Ah! And of twenty others
that maybe you're forgetting?
I think my fine young man
is a bit of a libertine.

DUKE
Yes, I'm a monster.

goes to embrace her

GILDA
Ah, father!

MADDALENA
Leave me alone,
you scatterbrain!

DUKE
Ho, what a fuss!

MADDALENA
Behave yourself!

DUKE
Be nice to me,
don't play hard to get.

Good behavior doesn't exclude
jollity and love.
caressing her hand
Pretty white hand!

MADDALENA
You are joking, sir.

DUKE
No, no.

MADDALENA
I'm ugly.

DUKE
Kiss me.

GILDA
(Deceiver!)

MADDALENA
You're drunk!

DUKE
With love.

MADDALENA
If you're trifling with me, sir,
I'm indifferent.

DUKE
No, no. I want to marry you...

MADDALENA
I want your word of honor.

DUKE
ironic
Sweet little maid!

RIGOLETTO
to Gilda, who has seen and heard all
Haven't you seen enough?

GILDA
The wicked deceiver!

DUKE
Fairest daughter of love,

I am a slave to your charms;
with but a single word you could
relieve my every pain.
Come, touch my breast and feel
how my heart is racing.

MADDALENA
Ah! Ah! That really makes me laugh;
talk like that is cheap enough.
Believe me, I know exactly
what such play-acting is worth!
I, my fine sir, am quite accustomed
to foolish jokes like this.

GILDA
Ah, these are the loving words
the scoundrel spoke once to me!
O wretched heart betrayed
do not break for sorrow.

RIGOLETTO
to Gilda
Hush weeping can do no good...
You are now convinced he was lying.
Hush, and leave it up to me
to hasten our revenge.
It will be quick, it will be deadly,
I know how to deal with him.

Listen to me, go home.
Take some money and a horse,
Put on the men's clothes I provided,
then leave at once for Verona.
I shall meet you there tomorrow.

GILDA
Come with me now.

RIGOLETTO
It's impossible.

GILDA
I'm afraid.

RIGOLETTO
Go!

*The Duke and Maddalena continue to laugh
and talk together as they drink. Gilda having*

left, Rigoletto goes behind the house and returns with Sparafucile, counting out money into the cut-throat's hands.

No. 13 — Scena, Trio and Storm

RIGOLETTO

Twenty scudi, you said? Here are ten,
and the rest when the work is finished.
He is staying here?

SPARAFUCILE

Yes.

RIGOLETTO

At midnight
I shall return.

SPARAFUCILE

No point:
I can throw him in the river without help.

RIGOLETTO

No, no, I want to do it myself.

SPARAFUCILE

All right; his name?

RIGOLETTO

Do you want to know mine as well?
He is Crime, I am Punishment.

He leaves; the sky darkens, it thunders.

SPARAFUCILE

The storm is getting closer.
The night will be darker.

DUKE

Maddalena?

trying to embrace her

MADDALENA

pushing him away
Wait... my brother
is coming.

DUKE

So?

MADDALENA

Thunder!

SPARAFUCILE

entering
It's going to rain soon.

DUKE

So much the better.
You can sleep in the stable...
or in hell ... wherever you like.

SPARAFUCILE

Thank you.

MADDALENA

softly to the Duke
Ah no!... You must leave.

DUKE

to Maddalena
In this weather?

SPARAFUCILE

softly to Maddalena
It means twenty gold scudi.
to the Duke
I'll be glad
to offer you my room.
If you want to see it, let's go up now.

Taking a lamp, he starts up the stairs.

DUKE

Good; I'll be with you in a moment.

He whispers something to Maddalena, then follows Sparafucile.

MADDALENA

(Poor lad! He's so handsome!
God! What a night this is!)

DUKE

upstairs, noticing that the loft is open on one side

We sleep in the open, eh? Good enough!
Good night.

SPARAFUCILE

Sir, may God protect you.

DUKE

We'll sleep a little; I'm tired.

Oh, women are fickle, etc.

He lays down his hat and sword and stretches out on the bed and falls asleep.

Maddalena, meanwhile, has sat down at the table below. Sparafucile drinks from the bottle which the Duke left unfinished. Both are silent for a moment, lost in their thoughts.

MADDALENA

He is really most attractive, this young man.

SPARAFUCILE

Oh, yes ... to the tune of twenty scudi.

MADDALENA

Only twenty!... That's not much! He was worth more.

SPARAFUCILE

His sword: if he's asleep, bring it down to me.

Maddalena goes upstairs and stands looking at the sleeping Duke, then she closes the balcony as best she can and comes down carrying the sword. Gilda, meanwhile, appears in the road wearing male attire, boots and spurs, and walks slowly towards the inn where Sparafucile is still drinking. Frequent thunder and lightning.

GILDA

Ah, my reason has left me!

Love draws me back ... Father, forgive me!
thunder

What a terrible night! Great God, what will happen?

MADDALENA

having put the Duke's sword on the table
Brother?

GILDA

peeping through a crack
Who is speaking?

SPARAFUCILE

rummaging in a cupboard
Go to the devil!

MADDALENA

He's an Apollo, that young man; I love him, he loves me... let him be... let's spare him.

GILDA

listening
Dear God!

SPARAFUCILE

throwing her a sack
Mend this sack!

MADDALENA

Why?

SPARAFUCILE

Because your Apollo, when I've cut his throat,
will wear it when I throw him in the river.

GILDA

I see hell itself!

MADDALENA

But I reckon I can save you the money and save his life as well.

SPARAFUCILE

Difficult, I think.

MADDALENA

Listen... my plan is simple.
You've had ten scudi from the hunchback; he's coming later with the rest... Kill him, and the twenty you've got; so we lose nothing.

GILDA

What do I hear?... My father!

SPARAFUCILE

Kill the hunchback? What the devil do you mean?

Am I a thief? Am I a bandit?

What client of mine has ever been cheated?

This man pays me, and I shall deliver.

MADDALENA

Ah, have mercy on him!

SPARAFUCILE

He must die.

MADDALENA

I'll see he escapes in time.

She runs towards the stairs.

GILDA

Oh, merciful girl!

SPARAFUCILE

holding her back

We'd lose the money,

MADDALENA

That's true!

SPARAFUCILE

Don't interfere.

MADDALENA

We must save him.

SPARAFUCILE

If someone else comes here before midnight, they shall die in his place.

MADDALENA

The night is dark, the weather too stormy; no one will pass by here at this late hour.

GILDA

Oh, what a temptation! To die for the ingrate?

To die! And my father?... Oh, Heaven, have mercy!

A distant clock chimes half-past eleven.

SPARAFUCILE

There's still half an hour.

MADDALENA

weeping

Hait, brother...

GILDA

What! A woman like that weeps, and I do nothing to help him!

Ah, even if he betrayed my love

I shall save his life with my own!

She knocks on the door.

MADDALENA

A knock at the door?

SPARAFUCILE

It was the wind.

Gilda knocks again.

MADDALENA

Someone's knocking, I tell you.

SPARAFUCILE

How strange! Who's there?

GILDA

Have pity on a beggar;

grant him shelter for the night.

MADDALENA

A long night will it be!

SPARAFUCILE

Wait a moment.

searching in the cupboard

MADDALENA

Come on, get on with it, finish the job

I am eager to save one life with another.

SPARAFUCILE

So, I'm ready; open the door;
all I want to save is the gold.

GILDA

(Ah, death is near, and I am so young!
Oh, Heaven, for these sinners I ask thy
pardon.
Father, forgive your unhappy child!
May the man I am saving be happy.)

MADDALENA

Get on with it!

SPARAFUCILE

Open up!

MADDALENA

Enter!

GILDA

(God! Forgive them!)

MADDALENA, SPARAFUCILE

Enter!

Dagger in hand, Sparafucile positions himself behind the door; Maddalena opens it, then runs to close the big door under the archway while Gilda enters. Sparafucile closes the door behind her and the rest is darkness and silence.

No. 14 — Scena and Final Duet

Rigoletto comes down the road alone, wrapped in his cloak. The violence of the storm has abated, now there is only the occasional thunderclap and flash of lightning.

RIGOLETTO

At last the moment of vengeance is at hand!
For thirty days I have waited,
weeping tears of blood
behind my fool's mask. This door...
examining the house
is closed!... ah, it is not yet time! I shall
wait.

What a night of mystery!

A tempest above,
a murder below!

Oh, how big I feel now!

The clock chimes twelve.

Midnight!

He knocks at the door.

SPARAFUCILE

coming out of the house

Who's there?

RIGOLETTO

about to enter

It is I.

SPARAFUCILE

Wait.

He goes into the house and returns with the sack.

Here is your man, dead.

RIGOLETTO

Oh joy!... A light!

SPARAFUCILE

A light? No, the gold!

Rigoletto gives him a purse.

Let's throw him into the river quickly

RIGOLETTO

No, I can do it alone.

SPARAFUCILE

As you wish. This is not a good place.
Further on the stream is deeper. Quick,
so that no one sees you. Good night.

He goes back into the house.

RIGOLETTO

He's in there!... Dead! Oh, but I must see him!

But what's the use? ...It's him all right!

I can feel his spurs!

Now look upon me, O world!

Here is a buffoon, and his is a mighty prince!

He lies at my feet! It's him! Oh joy!
 At last you are avenged, O grief!
 Let the river be his tomb,
 a sack his winding sheet!
 To the river! To the river!

He is about to drag the sack towards the river, when he hears, to his amazement, the voice of the Duke in the distance.

DUKE
 Women are as fickle, *etc.*

RIGOLETTO
 His voice! ... This is a trick of the darkness!
drawing back in terror
 No!... No! This is he!...
shouting towards the house
 Damnation! Hola!... You devil of a bandit!
 Who can this be, here in his stead?
He cuts open the sack.
 I tremble... It's a human body!
lightning
 My daughter!... O God!... My daughter!
 Ah, no, it cannot be! She has left for Verona!
 It was a spectre...
kneeling
 It is she!
 Oh, my Gilda, child, answer me!
 Tell me the murderer's name!... Hola...
knocking desperately at the door
 No one?...
 No one!
returning to Gilda
 My daughter? My Gilda?... Oh, my daughter!

GILDA
 Who calls me?

RIGOLETTO
 She speaks!... She moves! ... She is alive!
 Oh, God!
 Ah, my only joy on earth ...
 look at me ... say who I am ...

GILDA
 Ah, my father!

RIGOLETTO
 I'm mystified!... What happened?... Are you wounded? Tell me...

GILDA
pointing to her heart
 The dagger wounded me here.

RIGOLETTO
 Who struck you?

GILDA
 I deceived you ... I was guilty ...
 I loved him too much ... now I die for him!

RIGOLETTO
 (Great God in heaven! She was struck by the bolt that I, in righteous vengeance, loosed!)
 Beloved angel! Look at me, listen to me!
 Speak, speak to me, dearest child.

GILDA
 Let me be silent! Forgive me, and him.
 Bless your daughter, O my father -
 in heaven above, near my mother,
 I shall pray for you evermore.
 No more... Farewell!

RIGOLETTO
 Do not die, my treasure, have pity!
 Oh, my dove, you must not leave me!
 If you go away, I shall be alone!
 Do not die, or I shall die beside you!
 Oh my daughter, my Gilda!

Gilda dies.