

1420. La Traviata: Liebe, ach Liebe

Backgrounds Of S. Radic

La traviata (Italian for "The departed from the way") is an opera by Giuseppe Verdi (music) and Francesco Maria Piave (libretto) based on the novel *La dame aux camélias* (1848), which the author Alexandre Dumas the younger had also staged as a play in February 1852. The opera was premiered on 6 March 1853 at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice and initially failed with the audience before it was revised and became one of the most successful operas in music history.

As before in *Rigoletto* and *Il trovatore*, Verdi placed a person outlawed and rejected by society at the centre of the action. An opera about a courtesan who died of tuberculosis was an unheard-of innovation at the time. The libretto by Francesco Maria Piave is based on the novel *La dame aux camélias* by Alexandre Dumas the Younger. The novel Dumas' contains autobiographical elements and is based on an affair between the poet and the modiste and Kurtisane Marie Duplessis, whose admirers included numerous nobles. Her brief relationship took place between 1844 and 1845, during which time Marie's illness became apparent and she died on 3 February 1847. In 1852 a theatre version of the novel was performed, which left a great impression on the audience and is regarded as one of the highlights of the French theatre of this time.

Giuseppe Verdi knew both the novel and the play, the premiere of which he experienced during a stay in Paris. Already in spring 1852 he conceived together with Piave the scenic framework of his opera. At first they planned the title *Amore e Morte* 'Liebe und Tod' (Love and Death). Verdi completed the music in only 45 days. At the time of the premiere on March 6, 1853, the death of the person described was only six years ago. Verdi's interest in this material is also related to his own biography. Since 1847 he lived together with the singer Giuseppina Strepponi, who already had several illegitimate children and was therefore considered a "fallen person" herself. Verdi's work is not a moral sermon, but transfigures the suffering of the woman concerned. Verdi and Strepponi did not marry until 1859.



The premiere at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice was a fiasco, although Verdi had staged it himself and, as a precaution, had brought the plot forward to the time of Louis XIV. Verdi was aware that it was a risk to make a courtesan the title character of an opera and thus to reproach Italian society for its own immorality. But also the singers - especially the tenor Lodovico Graziani as Alfredo and the baritone Felice Varesi as Giorgio Germont - were responsible for the failure. Only Fanny Salvini-Donatelli was able to play her role as Violetta, but was ridiculed as "as round as a sausage" because of her figure. The other actors were Speranza Giuseppini as Flora, Angelo Zuliani as Gastone, Carlotta Berini as Annina and Andreas Bellini as Dottore Grenvil.

For the performance in the following year on 6 May 1854 at the Teatro San Benedetto, also in Venice, Verdi slightly revised the score. The changes included the duet Violetta/Germont in the second act and the Cabaletta Germonts and the duet Violetta/Alfredo in the third act. This performance was a great success, although the choice of libretto continued to be criticized. For reasons of censorship, the opera was also performed in Italy under the title *Violetta*. The success continued after this second performance until today. According to the statistics, *La traviata* is Verdi's most popular opera.

The first performance in the German-speaking world took place on 4 May 1855 at the Theater am Kärntnertor in Vienna, at that time still in Italian, the first German-speaking one then in Hamburg on 10 November 1857. The Violetta sang Natalie Eschborn. She was also the one who translated the libretto into German.

The dramatic interpretation of the title role by Maria Callas in productions of the 1950s is regarded as masterful.

Beguine, T=80

The musical score is arranged in a standard orchestral layout. It includes staves for Bells, Strings, Guitar, Bass, and Drums. The Drums section is further detailed with sub-staves for Ride-Cymb., Bongo-low, Bongo-mid, Shaker, BD, and DSD. The score is divided into two main sections, 'Main 1' and 'Main 2', with a double bar line between them. The time signature is 4/4, and the tempo is marked as T=80. The key signature is one flat (B-flat).

Programming instruction

The Beguine (or Biguine) is often understood as a social dance in lively 4/4 time, but also as a style of music. The dancers call Beguine a slow music similar to rumba, which they often use instead of too fast rumba music. The dance originated in the 19th century on the Lesser Antilles with Caribbean elements, which at that time belonged to France. The name Beguine derives from the French s'embéguiner (flirt with someone, court someone). In its three main forms (béguine de salon, béguine de bal and béguine de rue), dance soon arrived in Paris and from there, especially through the colonial exhibition of 1931, in other parts of the world. The American composer Cole Porter was inspired by the music he got to know in Paris to his worldwide success "Begin The Beguine" (1935). For Beguine, only one binding rhythm phrase is recognizable: the bass+guitar rhythm accompaniment - everything else is just "Latin ad lib":

This musical notation illustrates the characteristic bass and guitar rhythm accompaniment for Beguine. It shows a four-measure phrase in 4/4 time. The guitar part consists of a series of chords: a quarter note chord, followed by two eighth-note chords, and a quarter note chord. The bass part consists of a quarter note, followed by two eighth notes, and a quarter note. This creates a steady, rhythmic accompaniment.