

LA TRAVIATA

GIUSEPPE VERDI

Synopsis

ACT ONE

In her Paris salon, the courtesan Violetta Valéry greets party guests, including Gastone, who introduces a new admirer, Alfredo Germont. This young man, having adored Violetta from afar, addresses her with a drinking song; she joins him in the salute to pleasure. An orchestra is heard in the next room, but as guests move there to dance, Violetta suffers an attack of faintness. Concerned, Alfredo returns and, since they are alone, confesses his love. At first Violetta protests that love means nothing to her. Something in the young man's sincerity touches her, however, and she promises to meet him the next day. After the guests have gone home, Violetta wonders if Alfredo could actually be the man to fulfill her need for love. But she decides she prefers freedom, though Alfredo's voice, heard outside, argues in favor of romance.

ACT TWO

Scene I

Alfredo and Violetta are living in a villa near Paris, where he praises their contentment. When the maid, Annina, reveals that Violetta has pawned her jewels to keep the villa, Alfredo leaves for the city to raise money. Violetta receives an invitation from Flora to a party that night. She has no intention of going back to her old life, but trouble intrudes with the appearance of Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont. He demands she renounce his son: the scandal of Alfredo's affair with her has threatened his daughter's engagement. Violetta says she cannot, but Germont eventually convinces her. Alone, the desolate woman sends a message of acceptance to Flora and begins a farewell note to Alfredo. He enters suddenly, surprising her, and she can barely control herself as she repeats how deeply she loves him before rushing out. A servant hands Alfredo her farewell note as Giorgio returns to console his son with reminders of family life in Provence. But Alfredo, seeing Flora's invitation, determines to confront her at the party that evening.

Scene II

At her soirée, Flora learns from the Marquis that Violetta and Alfredo have parted, then clears the floor for a band of Gypsies and dancers, who sing of a bullfighter and his coy sweetheart. Soon Alfredo strides in, making bitter comments about love and gambling recklessly at cards. Violetta has arrived with Baron Douphol, who challenges Alfredo to a game and loses a small fortune to him. Everyone goes in to supper, but Violetta has asked Alfredo to stay behind. Fearful of the Baron's anger, she wants Alfredo to leave, but he misunderstands her apprehension and demands that she admit she loves Douphol. Crushed, she pretends she does. Alfredo calls in the others, denounces Violetta and hurls his winnings at her feet. As the guests rebuke him and Douphol challenges him to a duel, the elder Germont enters in search of his son and also denounces his behavior.

ACT THREE

In Violetta's bedroom, Dr. Grenvil tells Annina that Violetta has not long to live; tuberculosis has claimed her. Alone, Violetta rereads a letter from Germont saying the Baron was only wounded in his duel with Alfredo, who has now been told the truth and is on his way to beg her pardon. But Violetta senses it is too late. Paris is celebrating Mardi Gras, and after revelers pass outside, Annina rushes in to announce Alfredo. The lovers ecstatically plan to leave Paris forever. Giorgio Germont enters with the doctor before Violetta is seized with a last resurgence of strength. Feeling life return, she gets out of bed, staggers and then falls dead at her lover's feet.