

Sunday Recommendations 2/27/2022 (translations: Dianne L. Durante)

4. Verdi, Giuseppe. "Bella figlia dell' amore," from *Rigoletto* (1851).

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xDkYkOHj20>, a 2007 performance in Baden Baden with Anna Netrebko (Gilda), Elina Garanca (Maddalena), Ramon Vargas (Duke of Mantua) and Ludovic Tezier (Rigoletto)

This is one of the most famous quartets in all of opera: a fabulous combination of words and music. I suggest reading the lyrics and my comments first. Then watch the video several times. The four singers have very distinctive voices: the Duke is a tenor, Rigoletto a baritone (with a much lower range); Gilda is a soprano, Maddalena a contralto (again, with a lower range). Listen to each of the singers in turn as you watch them act out what they're singing, and when they overlap with the other three.

First to sing is the Duke of Mantua, an utterly charming man who has absolute power within his domain combined with the morals of a feral tomcat. When the opera began he was obsessed with beautiful young Gilda, but was happily beginning an affair with another man's wife—and, we learn from an enraged father, had recently seduced another young girl. When the Duke sings "La donna e mobile" early in Act III, the audience is well aware of how ironic it is for him to be calling anyone else fickle.

[In video, begins at 1:53] The Duke has come to a raunchy tavern to have sex with the innkeeper's sister, Maddalena. His music is slow, seductive, lyrical. Like the Duke, it tends to dominate.

Bella figlia dell'amore, Schiavo son dei vezzi tuoi; Con un detto sol tu puoi Le mie pene consolar. Vieni e senti del mio core Il frequente palpitar.	Beautiful daughter of love, I'm a slave to your charms. With one word, you alone can relieve my every suffering. Come and feel the frantic beating of my heart.
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[In video, begins at 2:58] Maddalena is flirting with the Duke. She's obviously attracted to him, but claims to think he's joking.

Ah! ah! rido ben di core, Che tai baie costan poco Quanto valga il vostro gioco, Mel credete, so apprezzar. Son avvezza, bel signore, Ad un simile scherzar.	Ah, that makes me laugh! Such jokes are worth little. Believe me, kind sir, I know what such games are worth. I'm familiar with that sort of kidding around.
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[In video, begins at 3:05] Gilda, who begins singing just after Maddalena, is standing outside, watching the Duke and Maddalena through a chink in the wall. The Duke told her he loved her, and then raped her. Now he's trying to seduce Maddalena as he once seduced Gilda. Gilda can no longer deny that he's a cad. She's distraught.

Ah, così parlar d'amore A me pur intame ho udito! Infelice cor tradito, Per angoscia non scoppiar.	Oh, the infamous man used to speak that way of love to me! Don't break of sorrow, my wretched, betrayed heart.
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[In video, begins at 3:11] Rigoletto is Gilda's father and the Duke's court jester. He knows the Duke has raped Gilda, but that she still loves the Duke. A few minutes earlier we saw him tell the innkeeper (who moonlights as an assassin) that he may want the Duke killed. In the quartet, when Gilda finally admits how despicable the Duke is, we know exactly what "vendetta" Rigoletto has in mind.

Taci, il piangere non vale... Ch'ei mentiva sei sicura. Taci, e mia sarà la cura La vendetta d'affrettar. Sì, pronta fia, sarà fatale, Io saprollo fulminar.	Quiet! Crying does no good. Now you know for certain he's a liar. Quiet, and I'll take care of our revenge. Yes, it will be quick and deadly; I know how to smite him.
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