

LA TRAVIATA – STORY OF THE OPERA

TIME: Around 1860
PLACE: In and near Paris

ACT ONE

A salon in Violetta's home

Intermission

ACT TWO

Scene 1. A country house
Scene 2. Flora's mansion

Intermission

ACT THREE

Violetta's bedroom

ACT ONE

A party is in progress at the Paris home of a beautiful courtesan, Violetta Valéry, who only recently has revived from serious illness. Gastone de Letorières introduces her to Alfredo Germont, his friend from the country. Violetta's current lover, Baron Douphol, is irritated with Alfredo because during Violetta's recent illness, Alfredo came to her home each day to express his concern. Gastone encourages Alfredo to lead a drinking song (Brindisi: *Libiamo ne' lieti calici*).

The guests move into the next room for dancing, but Violetta, feeling faint, stays behind. She is startled by the reappearance of Alfredo and gently rebuffs him when he declares his love (Duet: *Un di felice*). Finally she gives him a flower, telling him to return when it has faded. Overjoyed – since this means he will see her the next day – he leaves, followed moments later by the other guests, who affectionately bid their hostess goodnight.

Violetta wonders if Alfredo offers the true love she thought would never be hers (Aria: *Ah! fors'è lui*). She laughs off the idea, declaring that her life will remain a whirl of pleasure (Cabaletta: *Sempre libera*).

ACT TWO

Scene 1. Five months later Alfredo is blissfully happy living with Violetta in the country,

far from Paris society (Aria: *De' miei bollenti spiriti*). When Alfredo learns from the maid, Annina, that Violetta has been selling her possessions to pay their expenses, he rushes off to Paris to raise the necessary funds (Cabaletta: *O mio rimorso*). Violetta is perplexed by Alfredo's sudden departure. She receives an invitation to a party to be given by her friend, Flora Bervoix, that evening in Paris and quickly dismisses it.

A visitor arrives: Alfredo's father, who is outraged by his son's liaison with Violetta. She responds that she is a lady and will not be insulted in her own house. Germont insists that Violetta give up Alfredo for the sake of his family: Alfredo has a sister whose chances for a prosperous marriage would be doomed by Alfredo's relationship with Violetta. Having assumed that Violetta is after his son's money, he is surprised to see that she loves Alfredo unselfishly. She is eventually convinced by Germont's appeal and agrees to leave Alfredo (Duet: *Dite alla giovine*), knowing that it will hasten her death. Germont urges her to live and attempts to console her with the thought that heaven will reward her sacrifice. He embraces her and leaves. Violetta decides to go to Flora's party that night and writes a farewell note to Alfredo. When he returns, she begs him simply to love her as much as she loves him and then runs from the room.

The confused Alfredo is surprised when a messenger delivers the farewell note from Violetta. He reads only a few lines before despair overwhelms him, but his father appears and offers comfort. He begs his son to return to the family in Provence (Aria: *Di Provenza il mar*), and urges Alfredo to seek solace in their embrace (Cabaletta: *No, non udrai rimproveri*). Noticing Flora's invitation, Alfredo assumes that Violetta has returned to her old life – and to her old lover. He resolves to seek revenge at the party.

Scene 2. At Flora's home, everyone enjoys vigorous Spanish entertainment (Chorus: *Noi siamo zingarelle*). Alfredo startles the guests by arriving without Violetta. She soon arrives, escorted by Baron Douphol, who battles Alfredo at the gaming table. Alfredo

wins every game and large sums of money. When supper is announced, all adjourn to the dining room, but the distraught Violetta soon reappears, having asked to see Alfredo privately. Fearing Douphol's jealousy, she begs Alfredo to leave immediately. He refuses, finally drawing from her a false confession that she loves Douphol. Summoning the guests, Alfredo humiliates and denounces Violetta and throws his winnings at her feet as payment for her services. She faints, to the horror of all present, who castigate Alfredo for his behavior. Germont, who has followed his son to the party, reproaches him for insulting a woman, even in anger. Now revived, Violetta laments that Alfredo will never understand the sacrifice she made for love (Ensemble: *Alfredo, Alfredo*).

ACT THREE

One month later, Violetta lies dying in her Paris home. Dr. Grenvil encourages her, but admits to Annina that Violetta has only a few hours to live. Violetta asks Annina to distribute her remaining money to the poor. Left alone, she rereads a letter from Germont: Alfredo, having wounded the baron in a duel, is traveling abroad. Germont has written him of Violetta's sacrifice, and Alfredo – accompanied by his father – will soon return to ask her forgiveness. Violetta knows that it is too late (Aria: *Addio del passato*).

Annina reappears, asking her mistress if she feels well enough to hear some unexpected, joyous news. Within seconds Violetta is in Alfredo's arms. He convinces her that she will regain her health once they start life together again, far from Paris (Duet: *Parigi, o cara*). Violetta wishes to go to church to offer a prayer of thanksgiving. She attempts to dress, but her energy is gone. In anger and despair, she asks how God can let her die so young.

When Germont arrives, he is horrified to see Violetta in such terrible condition. She gives Alfredo a miniature of herself in happier days, and asks that he give it to the woman he will one day marry (Finale: *Prendi, quest'è l'immagine*). Violetta suddenly declares that she has found new strength, but then falls lifeless.