

GIUSEPPE
VERDI *La Traviata*

CARLOS
KLEIBER



SUPER AUDIO CD

SURROUND



Giuseppe Verdi

GIUSEPPE VERDI (1813–1901)

La Traviata

Opera in tre atti · Opera in three acts · Oper in drei Akten
Opéra en trois actes

Libretto/livret: Francesco Maria Piave

Violetta Valery	.....	Ileana Cotrubas
Flora Bervoix	.....	Stefania Malagú
Annina	.....	Helena Jungwirth
Alfredo Germont	.....	Plácido Domingo
Giorgio Germont	.....	Sherrill Milnes
<i>suo padre · his father · sein Vater · son père</i>		
Gastone, Visconte de Létorières	.....	Walter Gullino
Barone Douphol	.....	Bruno Grella
Marchese d'Obigny	.....	Alfredo Giacomotti
Dottore Grenvil	.....	Giovanni Foiani
Giuseppe	.....	Walter Gullino
<i>servo di Violetta · Violetta's servant · Violetta's Diener · serviteur de Violetta</i>		
Domestico di Flora	.....	Paul Friess
<i>Flora's servant · ein Diener Floras · un serviteur de Flora</i>		
Commissionario	.....	Paul Winter
<i>a messenger · ein Bote · un commissionnaire</i>		

Bayerischer Staatsopernchor

(Chorus master · Einstudierung · direction des chœurs:
Wolfgang Baumgart)

Bayerisches Staatsorchester

CARLOS KLEIBER

1 Preludio [3'33]

ATTO PRIMO/ACT I/ERSTER AKT/ACTE I

Introduzione

2 "Dell'invito trascorso è già l'ora"
(*Coro, Violetta, Flora, Marchese, Barone, Dottore, Gastone, Alfredo*) [4'34]

Brindisi/Toast/Trinklied

3 "Libiamo ne' lieti calici"
(*Alfredo, Tutti, Violetta*) [2'55]

Valzer e Duetto

4 "Che è ciò?"
(*Tutti, Violetta, Alfredo*) [2'18]

5 "Un dì felice, eterea"
(*Alfredo, Violetta*) [3'05]

6 "Ebben? che diavol fate?"
(*Gastone, Violetta, Alfredo*) [1'12]

Stretta dell'Introduzione

7 "Si ridesta in ciel l'aurora"
(*Tutti*) [1'37]

Scena ed Aria - Finale

8 "È strano! ... Ah, fors'è lui"
(*Violetta*) [3'36]

9 "Follie! Delirio vano è questo! ... Sempre libera"
(*Violetta, Alfredo*) [4'23]

ATTO SECONDO/ACT II/ZWEITER AKT/ACTE II

Quadro Primo/Scene 1/Erstes Bild/Premier Tableau

Scena ed Aria

10 "Lunge da lei ... De' miei bollenti spiriti"
(*Alfredo*) [3'33]

11 "Annina, donde vieni? ... Oh mio rimorso!"
(*Alfredo, Annina*) [2'18]

Scena e Duetto

12 "Alfredo?" – "Per Parigi or or partiva"
(*Violetta, Annina, Giuseppe, Germont*) [3'18]

13 "Pura siccome un angelo"
(*Germont, Violetta*) [1'40]

14 "Non sapete quale affetto"
(*Violetta, Germont*) [1'58]

15 "Un dì, quando le veneri"
(*Germont, Violetta*) [2'34]

16 "Ah! Dite alla giovine"
(*Violetta, Germont*) [4'06]

17 "Imponete" – "Non amarlo ditegli"
(*Violetta, Germont*) [4'17]

Scena

18 "Dammi tu forza, o cielo!"
(*Violetta, Annina*) [1'43]

19 "Che fai?" – "Nulla"
(*Alfredo, Violetta*) [2'05]

Scena ed Aria

20 "Ah, vive sol quel core"
(*Alfredo, Giuseppe, Commissionario, Germont*) [2'12]

21 "Di Provenza il mar, il suol"
(*Germont*) [3'59]

22 "Né rispondi d'un padre all'affetto? ... No, non udrai rimproveri"
(*Germont, Alfredo*) [2'41]

SACD 2

[45'40]

Quadro Secondo/Scene 2/Zweites Bild/Deuxième Tableau

Finale II

1 "Avrem lieta di maschere la notte"
(*Flora, Marchese, Dottore*) [1'01]

2 "Noi siamo zingarelle"
(*Coro, Flora, Marchese, Dottore*) [2'45]

3 "Di Madride noi siam mattadori"
(*Gastone, Coro, Flora, Dottore, Marchese*) [2'32]

4 "Alfredo! Voi!"
(*Tutti, Alfredo*) [3'55]

5 "Invitato a qui seguirmi"
(*Violetta, Alfredo, Tutti*) [2'27]

6 "Ogni suo aver tal femmina"
(*Alfredo, Tutti*) [1'30]

7 "Di sprezzo degno se stesso rende"
(*Germont, Alfredo, Flora, Gastone, Barone, Dottore, Marchese, Coro*) [1'48]

8 "Alfredo, Alfredo, di questo core"
(*Violetta, Tutti*) [4'03]

ATTO TERZO/ACT III/DRITTER AKT/ACTE III

9 Preludio [3'36]

Scena ed Aria

10 "Annina?" – "Comandate?" [3'53]
(*Violetta, Annina, Dottore*)

11 "Teneste la promessa ... Attendo, né a me giungon mai ... [3'58]
Addio del passato"
(*Violetta*)

Baccanale

12 "Largo al quadrupede" [0'44]
(*Coro di Maschere*)

Scena e Duetto

13 "Signora ..." – "Che t'accadde?" [4'45]
(*Annina, Violetta, Alfredo*)
"Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo"
(*Alfredo, Violetta*)

14 "Ah, non più! ... Ah! Gran Dio! Morir si giovine" [3'00]
(*Violetta, Alfredo*)

Finale ultimo

15 "Ah, Violetta!" – "Voi? Signor?" [1'43]
(*Germont, Violetta, Alfredo*)

16 "Prendi, quest'è l'immagine" [3'51]
(*Violetta, Alfredo, Germont, Annina, Dottore*)

CARLOS KLEIBER

Taking Verdi Seriously

When Deutsche Grammophon's new recording of *La traviata* first appeared in the shops at the end of 1977, there were already some dozen other versions of this most popular of Verdi's works to choose from. From the standpoint of the recorded repertory, then, there was really no reason for a further retelling of poor Violetta Valery's life in Parisian high society in the years around 1700. This new recording, however, was conducted by no ordinary Verdian, but by Carlos Kleiber, a conductor as stubborn as he is brilliant and one whom any record company would have been only too happy to sign up, no matter what the recording project.

At the time the then 47-year-old Kleiber agreed to the terms of his contract for *La traviata*, he had made just four recordings for the yellow label: *Der Freischütz*, *Die*

Fledermaus and Beethoven's Fifth and Seventh Symphonies. In every case the musical results had met with unanimous acclaim: not for a long time had these hackneyed and over-familiar works sounded so fresh and cleanly structured, not for a long time had they been played so decisively and with such precision of detail. To that extent, it was almost a matter of indifference what Kleiber would turn to next and to which work he would bring his perfectionist's precision and scrupulous attention to musical values.

It all worked out, with Kleiber's recording proving exemplary not only in the short term, but also in the longer term: even today it remains a model of what can be achieved when Verdi is taken seriously. Kleiber achieved his aim not by dint of an interpretation that rendered the piece unrecognizable, not by dotting every i and crossing every t or by treating the opera with cool disdain, but by bringing a sense of subtle nuance to every aria and phrase, to every tectonic and articulatory element.

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comes alive and takes on the air of a genuine crisis in its characters' lives.

The pre-war recordings that Carlos Kleiber's father Erich made for Deutsche Grammophon were notable for a brio that stemmed from the interplay of structure, harmony, polyphony, rhythm, gesture and

flowing line. A good 40 years later Carlos Kleiber in turn allowed his listeners to relive this quality to an arguably even more intense and impressive degree.

Bernhard Uske
(Translation: Stewart Spencer)

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

The opera opens with a poignant prelude which establishes the feeling of impending tragedy. The curtain rises on a room in the Paris house of Violetta Valery, a courtesan, where a party is in progress. Violetta greets some of the guests, including Flora and her escort the Marquis d'Obigny, and before long they are joined by Gastone, who introduces to Violetta a young man, Alfredo Germont. Gastone informs her that Alfredo has admired her for a long time from afar,

and recently when she was ill, called every day to ask about her health. Somewhat touched by his devotion she asks Alfredo if it is true, and when he replies in the affirmative she remarks to her protector, Baron Douphol, that *he* had not done the like – a comment which annoys the Baron greatly. Alfredo becomes silent and Gastone suggests that his friend should entertain the company with a drinking song, which the latter is reluctant to do. But when Violetta adds her request as well, Alfredo breaks into the famous Brindisi (*Libiamo ne' leti calici*), in which he sings of the pleasures of wine.

Violetta responds in the same vein and the whole company joins in praise of pleasure. When the general gaiety has reached its height, music is heard coming from the adjoining room and Violetta suggests that they should all go in and dance. As they move towards the door she is suddenly overcome by faintness, and although she attempts to continue on her way she has another attack, and is forced to sit down. Informing the company that she will join them in a moment, she bids them go in. Looking in a mirror, Violetta comments to herself on her paleness, and at that moment she suddenly becomes aware of Alfredo, who has lingered behind. He warns her that she will kill herself if she continues her present mode of life, and before long he declares his love. Violetta responds with cynical banter, but nevertheless she is moved and asks him how long he has loved her. He answers "a year", and in a duet of tenderness and charm (*Un dì felice, eterea*) he describes the love he has felt since the first time he saw her pass by. She replies that she can offer

him nothing but friendship since she is incapable of love, and counsels him to forget her. Taking a flower from her corsage, however, she tells him to come back when it is faded, which he interprets as the morrow. Overcome with joy, he takes the flower and departs. Exhilarated by the dancing the guests come back from the ballroom and take their leave of Violetta (*Si ridesta in ciel l'aurora*).

Violetta is left alone, and to her surprise finds that she has been much affected by Alfredo's declaration (*È strano! è strano!*). In an aria (*Ah, fors'è lui*) she reveals her longing for that which Alfredo represents – the state of loving and of being loved. She soon dismisses her thoughts as complete folly, however, and in a brilliant cabaletta (*Sempre libera degg'io*) she decides to throw herself once more into the continuous round of pleasure her life has always been. The sound of Alfredo's voice in the distance checks her for a moment, but casting doubt aside she soon returns to her former light-hearted mood.

ACT II

The curtain rises on a room in a country house near Paris, where Violetta and Alfredo have been living together for three months. Alfredo comes in, and in an aria (*De' miei bollenti spiriti*) he expresses the joy he has experienced since living with Violetta. Violetta's maid Annina enters. She tells him that she has returned from Paris, where, he is astounded to learn, she had been sent by her mistress to arrange the sale of her possessions to maintain their household. The maid discloses that 1,000 *louis* are needed and on hearing this Alfredo tells her he will go to Paris to remedy matters. Left alone, he is overcome with remorse and reproaches himself for not realizing how things stood financially, vigorously declaring his intention to wipe out his shame (*Oh mio rimorso! Oh infamia!*).

After he has gone, Violetta enters and Giuseppe, a servant, hands her a note which is from Flora. Telling him that she is expecting a man on business, she directs her attention to the letter, which is an invita-

tion to a party that evening: an event which arouses little interest in Violetta. Giuseppe announces the arrival of a gentleman and thinking that it is the lawyer she is expecting, Violetta signs to the servant to show him in. The visitor, however, is Alfredo's father Giorgio Germont. Surprised, Violetta motions him to be seated, but he immediately accuses her of leading his son to ruin; it is only after Violetta has shown him the papers relating to the sale of her possessions that he realizes that it is her money and not Alfredo's which is keeping them both. Although he is convinced that she loves his son, Germont says he must extract a sacrifice from her – the future of his two children is at stake. In an aria (*Pura siccome un angelo*) he reveals that Alfredo has a sister, and that if her brother refuses to return home, the girl's forthcoming marriage will be jeopardized. Violetta, misunderstanding the old man's meaning, informs him that she will separate from Alfredo for a time. This is not enough for Germont, who demands that she give up his son for ever. Violetta, having

neither friends nor relations, and knowing that her life is threatened by consumption, is filled with horror. Germont points out that when time has destroyed her charms (*Un di, quando le veneri*) Alfredo may become bored with her, and, as their union has not been blessed by heaven, she will derive little comfort from it. His pleading gradually wears down Violetta's resistance and in one of the most moving duets in opera (*Ah! Dite alla giovine sì bella e pura*) she agrees to make the sacrifice demanded of her. Germont is touched by her nobility and Violetta, overcome with emotion, asks him to go.

Left alone, she hastily scrawls a note which she instructs Annina to deliver. Seeing it is addressed to Baron Douphol the maid exclaims in surprise. Having dismissed Annina, Violetta proceeds to write to Alfredo and has barely finished when he comes in. Puzzled by her confusion he seeks to find the cause, but, worried by a note his father has left him, he ceases to press Violetta further. Instead, he asks her to stay with him and greet the old man. Thoroughly over-

wrought by this time, she throws herself into his arms and begs him to tell her that he loves her. Mystified by her behaviour, Alfredo hastens to reassure her, and, forcing herself to be calm, Violetta departs.

Alfredo, beginning to wonder whether his father will come, is interrupted by Giuseppe, who tells him that Violetta has left in a carriage. Confident that she has gone on business, Alfredo tells the servant not to worry. Soon, a messenger appears at the door with a note which he gives to Alfredo. Overcome with anxiety he opens it, and a line is sufficient to tell him that Violetta has left him to return to her old life. Broken by the news, the unhappy Alfredo is about to rush out, but at that moment his father appears and takes him in his arms. Germont tries to soften the blow by reminding him of his home (*Di Provenza il mar*), but this has little effect, and, catching sight of Flora's invitation, the distraught Alfredo hurries out swearing vengeance.

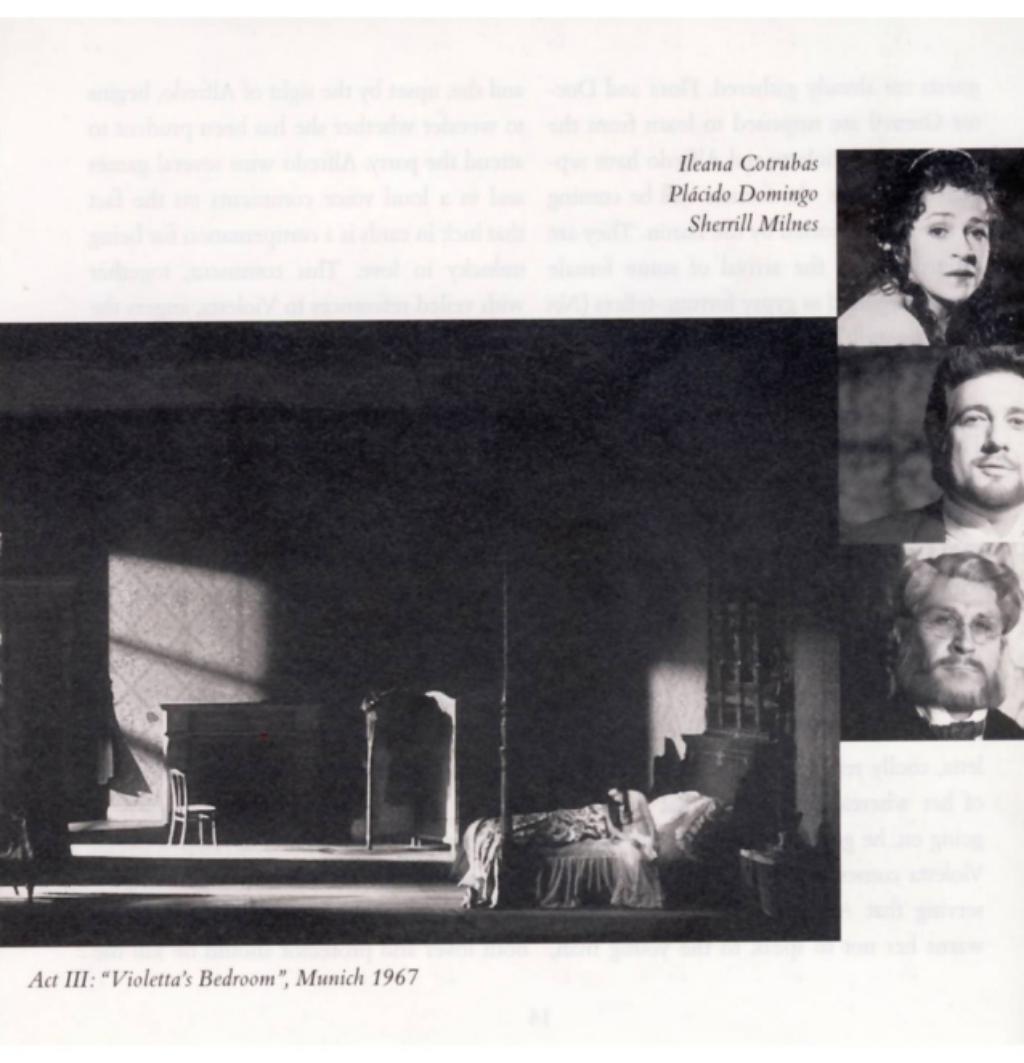
The scene changes to a richly furnished room in Flora's house in Paris where some



Carlos Kleiber



Act II / Part II: "Flora's Ballroom"



Act III: "Violetta's Bedroom", Munich 1967

Ileana Cotrubas
Plácido Domingo
Sherrill Milnes

guests are already gathered. Flora and Doctor Grenvil are surprised to learn from the Marquis that Violetta and Alfredo have separated, and that the former will be coming to the party escorted by the Baron. They are interrupted by the arrival of some female guests disguised as gypsy fortune-tellers (*Noi siamo zingarelle*), who mingle with the rest of the company offering to read hands. Their revelations cause a slight argument between Flora and the Marquis, but this is soon forgotten when Gastone and some men arrive on the scene dressed as matadors (*Di Madride noi siam mattadori*). They entertain the company by relating the story of Piquillo, a matador from Biscay, and when this is finished some of the guests move over to the gaming table to play cards.

Alfredo enters, and when asked about Violetta, coolly remarks that he knows nothing of her whereabouts. Seeing that a game is going on, he goes over and joins the players. Violetta comes in on the Baron's arm. Observing that Alfredo is present, the Baron warns her not to speak to the young man,

and she, upset by the sight of Alfredo, begins to wonder whether she has been prudent to attend the party. Alfredo wins several games and in a loud voice comments on the fact that luck in cards is a compensation for being unlucky in love. This comment, together with veiled references to Violetta, angers the Baron who challenges Alfredo to a game. The latter's luck continues to hold and the Baron loses a considerable sum of money, but before an already tense situation can develop further, a servant enters to announce supper. Proposing to take his revenge later, the Baron suggests that he and Alfredo join the others, and they all go out leaving the stage deserted.

After a moment, Violetta returns in a state of agitation. Certain that his hatred of her will drive him to come, she has sent a message asking Alfredo to join her. When he appears she begs him to leave the party at once, terrified lest a quarrel develop between him and the Baron. Alfredo is contemptuous, and asks her if she is afraid of losing both lover and protector should he kill the

Baron. He finally agrees to go if Violetta will promise to follow, but when she replies that such an action is impossible as she has promised to forget him, he demands to know to whom she has made the promise, and asks whether it is the Baron. With an effort, Violetta replies "yes", and Alfredo then asks whether she loves his rival. Resigned, she allows him to think that she does. Maddened with rage, Alfredo summons all the guests and pointing to Violetta reveals that she has squandered all her money on him. The moment has come, he says, when he can pay her back in full and taking the money he has won, he throws it at her feet. Overcome, Violetta sinks into Flora's arms and the outraged guests turn on Alfredo. Seeking his son, Germont comes in and rebukes him for his unmanly behaviour (*Di sprezzo degno*). Alfredo, his rage spent, is completely overwhelmed with remorse and all voice their reactions to the situation. This is interrupted as Violetta gently reproaches Alfredo for his action (*Alfredo, Alfredo, di questo core*) and as she

continues to speak her thoughts, the others accompany her, continuing in the same strain.

ACT III

A prelude precedes the last act, which is set in Violetta's bedroom where she lies dying of consumption, tended by the faithful Annina. Doctor Grenvil comes in and tries to comfort Violetta by telling her that convalescence is not far off, but as he leaves he admits to Annina that her mistress has only a few hours to live. Hearing from Annina that it is Carnival, Violetta sends her to distribute money among the poor. Left alone, she takes from her bosom a letter from Germont which she reads aloud. He writes of a duel between Alfredo and the Baron in which the latter was wounded, and reveals that Alfredo, who is abroad, has been told of her sacrifice; both father and son are coming to ask her forgiveness. Sadly commenting that it is too late, Violetta looks in a mirror and sees the change illness has wrought in her appearance. In a pathetic

aria (*Addio del passato*) she bids farewell to the happy dreams of the past and asks God to have mercy on one who has erred.

Outside in the street, revellers' voices are heard singing the praises of the Fatted Ox of Carnival (*Largo al quadrupede*). As the shouts die down Annina hurries in to prepare Violetta for the arrival of Alfredo, and before long he rushes into the room. Passionately embracing Violetta he implores her forgiveness.

In a duet (*Parigi, o cara*) the lovers, forgetting for a moment the extreme hopelessness of Violetta's condition, plan to leave Paris and begin a new life. Wishing to go to church to give thanks for Alfredo's return, Violetta calls to Annina to help her dress, but when she attempts to put on her gown she sinks back exhausted by the effort, and the terrified Alfredo sends Annina to fetch the Doctor. Turning to her lover, Violetta tells him that if his return cannot restore her, nothing will. In an outburst (*Ah! Gran Dio!*

Morir sì giovine) she protests against her fate, and is joined by the unhappy Alfredo who adds his tears to hers.

Annina returns with the Doctor and Germont senior. The latter, full of remorse, runs to the dying Violetta and embraces her. Aware that the end is not far off, she gives Alfredo a miniature portrait of herself; this, she says, will remind him of the one who loved him so much. If some day he should meet a young girl and make her his wife, he is to give her the picture and tell her it is from one who is in heaven, praying for them both. An ensemble follows in which Germont, Annina and the Doctor give vent to their sorrow, while Alfredo begs Violetta not to die, and she again charges him to take the portrait. Suddenly, Violetta declares that her spasms of pain have ceased and strength is returning to her, but as her animation reaches its height she falls back, dead.

Quita Chavez

