ROYAL BALLET & OPERA

THE ROYAL OPERA
Music Director JAKUB HRŮŠA
Director of Opera OLIVER MEARS

ROLEX
Principal Partner, The Royal Opera

Rigoletto

Music GIUSEPPE VERDI
Libretto FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE after VICTOR HUGO's play *Le roi s'amuse*

Conductor MARK ELDER
Director OLIVER MEARS
Set Designer SIMON LIMA HOLDSWORTH
Costume Designer ILONA KARAS
Lighting Designer FABIANA PICCIOLI
Movement Director ANNA MORRISSEY

ROYAL OPERA CHORUS
Chorus Master GENEVIEVE ELLIS
Chorus Director WILLIAM SPAULDING

ORCHESTRA OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE
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General rehearsal
MONDAY 23 MARCH 2026 AT 7.30PM

Approximate Timings

Approximately 2 hours 35 minutes, with one interval.

Act I : 1 hour
Interval: 25 minutes
Act II: 30 minutes
Short pause: 5 minutes
Act III: 35 minutes

Guidance

Suitable for ages 12+
This production contains violence, gore, murder and implied sexual assault. There are depictions of sexual activity.
There is strobe lighting in Act III.

Language

Sung in Italian with English surtitles

Cast

Rigoletto GEORGE PETEAN
Gilda AIDA GARIFULLINA
Duke of Mantua IVÁN AYÓN RIVAS
Sparafucile WILLIAM THOMAS
Maddalena ANNE MARIE STANLEY
Count Monterone BLAISE MALABA
Giovanna JINGWEN CAI*
Marullo SAM HIRD*
Matteo Borsa EMMANUEL FONOTI-FUIMAONO*
Count Ceprano THOMAS D HOPKINSON
Countess Ceprano AMANDA BALDWIN
Page ELIZABETH WEISBERG
Court Usher NIGEL CLIFFE

*Jette Parker Artist

Extra Chorus
Tenors
SIMON BIAZECK, PHILLIP BELL, PHILLIP BROWN, ANDREW BUSHER, JON ENGLISH, ANDREW FRIEDHOFF, RICHARD MONK
Basses
JAMES BIRCHALL, OLIVER GIBBS, GABRIEL GOTTLIEB, GAVIN HORSLEY, JONATHAN WOOD
Actors
JAMIE FRANCIS, SULEIMAN SULEIMAN, ADDIS WILLIAMS

Count Monterone's Daughter SABINA ARTHUR

Dancers
CRISTINA CHINCHILLA, CHLOE DOWELL, AIMEE DULAKE, KEIKO HEWITT-TEALE, SARAH HIRSCH, SOLEDAD DE LA HOZ, BELINDA ROY

Synopsis

ACT I, SCENE 1

The Duke of Mantua is hosting a party. He has seen a young woman in church and tells his associate Borsa that he intends to seduce her. Count Ceprano is at the party with his wife Countess Ceprano. The Duke turns his attention to her in front of her jealous husband. Rigoletto mocks the Count. Another associate of the Duke, Marullo, announces that Rigoletto is keeping a mistress. The Duke and Rigoletto discuss how to deal with Ceprano. Should he be banished or beheaded? Ceprano, Marullo, Borsa and the other guests want to take revenge on Rigoletto. The nobleman Monterone arrives at the palace. He is angry because the Duke seduced and abandoned his daughter. Rigoletto taunts him mercilessly, and the Duke orders Monterone's arrest. Monterone curses them both.

SCENE 2

Rigoletto is on his way home, disturbed by Monterone's curse. He meets Sparafucile, an assassin. Sparafucile has been watching the house and knows that Rigoletto keeps a woman there. Sparafucile surmises that Rigoletto must have a love rival, and so offers his services. Rigoletto sends him away. Full of self-hatred, Rigoletto ponders his similarities to Sparafucile. It is not Rigoletto's mistress but his daughter, Gilda, who lives in the house. She greets him warmly but Rigoletto will answer none of her questions about her dead mother, or even tell her his own name. When she begs to go out into the city, he forbids her. He orders Giovanna, his servant, to watch over his daughter. They are overheard by the Duke, who is hiding in the shadows.

When Rigoletto leaves, Gilda feels guilty: she has not told her father about the man she saw in church (who is actually the Duke in disguise). The Duke pays Giovanna to leave him alone with Gilda. He declares his love for her and she reciprocates. He tells her he is only a poor student. Giovanna hears footsteps outside. She thinks it is Rigoletto coming home, and warns the Duke – he leaves and Gilda reflects on their meeting. The footsteps belong to Marullo, Borsa, Ceprano and the other courtiers. They have come to capture the girl they believe to be Rigoletto's mistress.

Rigoletto appears. Marullo tells the others to be quiet. He tells Rigoletto they have come to kidnap Countess Ceprano from the palace across the street. They trick him into wearing a blindfold and holding a ladder. They break into Rigoletto's house and capture Gilda. Realizing he has been tricked, Rigoletto discovers the empty house. In anguish, he remembers Monterone's curse.

INTERVAL

ACT II

The Duke returned to see Gilda but the house was empty. Now back in his palace, he curses whoever has robbed him of his prize. His courtiers rush in to tell him about their exploits of the previous night. The Duke guesses that Rigoletto's 'mistress' and daughter are the same person. He goes to find Gilda.

Rigoletto arrives, searching for Gilda and soon realises that the Duke is already with his daughter. Rigoletto reveals that Gilda is his daughter. He attacks the courtiers in his efforts to reach her. When they stop him, he pleads with them to have pity on him. Gilda appears and tells him everything that has happened between her and the man she now knows is the Duke. Monterone is sent to prison. He despairs that his curse on the Duke failed. Rigoletto swears he will have revenge on the Duke.

ACT III

A month has passed, and Rigoletto has planned his revenge: he has hired Sparafucile to murder the Duke. He waits with Gilda outside Sparafucile's home. Sparafucile's sister, Maddalena, has lured the Duke there for the night. The Duke enters, again disguised (this time as a soldier), and asks Sparafucile for wine and for Maddalena.

Rigoletto forces Gilda to witness the Duke seducing Maddalena. Gilda is heartbroken. Rigoletto tells her to go home and, dressed in boy's clothes, to flee to Verona where he will join her the next day.Sparafucile, unaware of the Duke's identity, asks the name of his victim. 'He is Crime', answers Rigoletto, 'I am Punishment'. Sparafucile shows the Duke to an upper room to wait for Maddalena. The Duke drifts off to sleep. A storm gathers. Maddalena has fallen for the Duke, and tries to persuade her brother to let him live. He refuses.

Gilda listens outside. Maddalena proposes a plan to kill Rigoletto when he returns with the money, and so spare the Duke's life. Sparafucile at last agrees to kill any traveller who comes to their door by midnight and present their body to Rigoletto instead. Torn between her father and the man she loves, Gilda chooses to die herself, and knocks on the door. Sparafucile stabs Gilda. At midnight, Rigoletto returns to claim his prize. Sparafucile drags out a heavy sack and urges him to throw it into the river. Rigoletto gloats over the body and begins to pull it towards the river when he hears the Duke singing in the distance. He opens the sack to discover the dying Gilda, who begs him to forgive her. She dies, and Rigoletto recalls the curse of Monterone for the final time.

Production

Music preparation CATRIONA BEVERIDGE, NICK FLETCHER, BEN-SAN LAU, ERIKA GUNDESEN,
Associate Director SOPHIE GILPIN
Assistant Director BENCE KALO
Assistant to the Movement Director AIMEE DULAKE
Fight Director KEV MCCURDY
Language Coaches MATTEO DALLE FRATTE, ALESSANDRA FASOLO

The Royal Opera

Patron HM THE KING
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Director of Opera OLIVER MEARS
Director of Casting PETER MARIO KATONA
Associate Director NETIA JONES
Administrative Director CORMAC SIMMS

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