

## OPERAS FOR JUNE 2026

<b>3 June</b>	Gounod	Romeo et Juliette
<b>10</b>	Janacek	Katya Kabanova
<b>17</b>	Schubert	Fierrabras
<b>24</b>	Verdi	Luisa Miller

### Stories of the Operas

**Roméo et Juliette** is an opera in five acts by Charles Gounod to a French libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, based on Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare. It was first performed at the Théâtre Lyrique (Théâtre-Lyrique Impérial du Châtelet), Paris on 27 April 1867.

#### Roles

Juliette	soprano	Angela Gheorghiu
Roméo, son of Montague	tenor	Roberto Alagna
Frère Laurent	bass	José van Damm
Mercutio, Romeo's friend	baritone	Simon Keenlyside
Stéphano, Romeo's page (trouser role)	mezzo-soprano	Marie-Ange Todorovitch
Count Capulet	bass	Alain Fondary
Tybalt, Lady Capulet's nephew	tenor	Daniel Galvez Vallejo
Gertrude, Juliet's nurse	mezzo-soprano	Claire Larcher
The Duke	bass	Alain Vernhes
Pâris, a young count	baritone	Didier Henry
Grégorio, Capulet's servant	baritone	Till Fechner
Benvolio, Montague's nephew	tenor	Guy Flechter
Frère Jean	bass	Christophe Fel

Orchestra and Chorus of the Capitole de Toulouse

Conductor Michel Plasson

Synopsis: The libretto follows the story of Shakespeare's play.

**Act 1:** Overture prologue:

A short chorus sets the scene of the rival families in Verona.

A masked ball in the Capulets' palace

Tybalt talks to Pâris about Juliette, who appears with her father. Roméo, Mercutio, Benvolio and their friends enter, disguised, and Mercutio sings a ballad about Queen Mab, after which Juliette sings a joyful waltz song. The first meeting between Roméo and Juliette takes place, and they fall in love. But Tybalt re-appears and suspects that the hastily re-masked Roméo is his rival. While Tybalt wants immediate revenge, Capulet orders that the ball continue.

**Act 2** The Capulets' garden

After Roméo's page Stephano has helped his master gain access, he reveals the two young lovers exchanging their vows of love.

**Act 3: Scene 1:** Laurent's cell

Roméo and Juliette, accompanied by Gertrude, go to the cell, and the wedding takes place. Laurent hopes that reconciliation between the houses of the Montagus and the Capulets may thus take place.

**Scene 2:** a street near Capulet's palace

Stephano sings to attract the occupants into the street. Gregoire and Stephano skirmish as men from each family appear. The duel is first between Tybalt and Mercutio, who falls dead, and then between Roméo, determined to avenge his comrade, and Tybalt. Tybalt is killed by Roméo, who is banished by the Duke.

**Act 4:** Juliet's room at dawn

Roméo and Juliette are together and, after a long duet, Roméo departs for exile. Juliette's father comes to remind her of Tybalt's dying wish for Juliette to marry Count Pâris. The friar gives Juliette a draught which will cause her to sleep, so as to appear as if dead and, after being laid in the family tomb, it is planned that Roméo will awaken her and take her away. [A ballet scene in the grand hall of the palace was inserted at this point.] But the opera continues. Juliet's father is determined that a wedding between his daughter and Count Pâris will take place that very day. An organ sounds in a gallery in the Capulet Palace and a grand march and wedding ceremony ensues. Just as Friar Laurent is about to place the ring on Juliette's finger, she falls seemingly lifeless in front of the assembled guests and to general consternation, is pronounced dead.

**Act 5:** Juliet's tomb

**Scene 1:** Friar Laurent asks Friar John if the letter he has sent to Romeo has been delivered. This would have explained the subterfuge of the sleeping potion but Friar John says that the messenger was killed. Friar Laurent insists that Roméo must be summoned immediately.

**Scene 2:** A long orchestral interlude portrays Juliette's long slumber. Roméo appears having broken into the tomb. Believing Juliette dead, he takes poison. As it takes effect, Juliette awakens from the friar's potion and the lovers' last duet is heard before the poison takes effect on Roméo. As Roméo weakens, Juliette stabs herself, to be united with her lover in death.

**Kát'a Kabanová** (also known in various spellings including Katia, Katja, Katya, and Kabanowa) is an opera in three acts, with music by Leoš Janáček to a libretto by the composer based on *The Storm*, a play by Alexander Ostrovsky, translated by Vincenc Červinka. The opera was also largely inspired by Janáček's love for Kamila Stösslová. Although he was 67 when it was premiered, *Kát'a Kabanová* is a clear response to Janáček's feelings for Kamila, and the work is dedicated to her. The first performance was at the National Theatre Brno on 23 November 1921.

The opera has had a complex publication history. František Neumann, the conductor of the opera's first performance, made changes that were incorporated into the first publication of the score in 1922 by Universal Edition. Conductor Václav Talich later produced a "re-orchestrated" version of the score. In 1992, Sir Charles Mackerras published a critical edition of the opera.

**Roles,**

Savěl Prokofjevic Dikój, a merchant	bass	Dalibor Jedlička
Boris Grigorjevič, Dikój's nephew	tenor	Petr Dvorský
Marfa Ignatěvna Kabanová (Kabanicha), widow of a rich merchant	contralto	Naděžda Kniplová
Tichon Ivanyč Kabanov, her son	tenor	Vladimír Krejčík
Kát'a (Katerina), Tichon's wife	soprano	Elisabeth Söderström
Váňa Kudrjaš, a schoolteacher	tenor	Zdeněk Švehla

Varvara, a foundling	mezzo-soprano	Libuše Márová
Kuligin, friend of Váňa Kudrjaš	baritone	Jaroslav Souček
Glaša, a servant	mezzo-soprano	Jitka Pavlová
Fekluša, a servant	mezzo-soprano	Gertrude Jahn
Žena (Woman)		Hedwig Drechsler
Rybář (Fisherman)		Adolf Tomaschek
Male and female citizens		

Vienna Philharmonic orchestra & chorus of the Vienna State Opera;  
Conductor Sir Charles Mackerras,

### **Synopsis**

Place: The Russian town of Kalinov on the shores of the Volga River

Time: The 1860s

### **Act 1**

Váňa Kudrjaš admires the view of the Volga River, which amuses the more literal-minded housekeeper of the adjoining Kabanov estate. Two men approach, Dikoj and his nephew, Boris Grigorjevič, where Dikoj is berating Boris. Dikoj learns that Kabanicha, the Kabanov family matriarch, is not at home. Dikoj leaves, and Boris explains to Váňa Kudrjaš why he tolerates the abuse: his parents are dead, and to be able to collect his inheritance, he must respect his uncle no matter what his uncle says to him. Boris also tells Váňa Kudrjaš that he is secretly in love with Kát'a, the young wife of Tichon. Kát'a appears and Kabanicha reproaches her son Tichon – Kát'a's husband – for his inattentiveness. Tichon and Kát'a try to calm her down, but Kabanicha will have none of it, telling Tichon that he spoils Kát'a. Tichon complains to Varvara, the family's foster daughter, who rebukes him for retreating into drinking more than defending Kát'a.

In the house, Kát'a tells Varvara of her happy childhood, and dreams of having a man who truly loves her. Tichon enters to say good-bye, as he is journeying to Kazan on business, for Kabanicha. Kát'a asks to accompany him or for him not to go, but he insists. Kát'a then asks him to make her swear an oath to speak to no strangers during his absence, which puzzles Tichon. Kabanicha announces that Tichon must go, but not before instructing Kát'a how to behave in his absence. Tichon dutifully says that Kát'a must treat Kabanicha like her own mother and always act properly. He bows to Kabanicha and kisses her and Kát'a before he departs.

### **Act 2**

The women are working on embroidery. Kabanicha criticizes Kát'a for not appearing more sorrowful at Tichon's absence. After Kabanicha leaves, Varvara shows Kát'a the key to the far part of the garden. Varvara intends to meet Váňa, her lover, there. She hints at the same suggestion for Kát'a, and puts the key in her hand. Kát'a is hesitant, but then surrenders to fate and will meet Boris. She steps outside as evening comes on. Kabanicha reappears with Dikoj, who is drunk and complaining that people take advantage of his softhearted nature. However, Kabanicha chastises him.

Váňa Kudrjaš is waiting for Varvara in the garden. Boris then unexpectedly appears, after receiving a message to go there. Varvara arrives, and she and Váňa go for a walk by the river. Kát'a then appears, and Boris declares his love for her. She is at first worried about social ruin, but finally she reciprocates, confessing her secret feelings for him. They embrace and they too leave for a walk. Váňa and Varvara return, as she explains her precautions should

Kabanicha suddenly appear. Kát'a and Boris are heard in wordless, ecstatic duet as Váňa and Varvara say that it is time to return home.

**Act 3** Ten days later

Váňa Kudrjáš and Kuligin are strolling near the river when an approaching storm causes them to take shelter in a ruined building. Other people join them, including Dikoj. Váňa tries to calm Dikoj with scientific explanations about a new invention, the lightning rod. However, this only angers Dikoj, who insists that lightning is not caused by electricity but is the punishment from God. The rain dies down, and people start to leave the shelter. Váňa meets Boris and Varvara. Varvara says that Tichon has returned, and Kát'a is very agitated. Kabanicha arrives with Tichon and Kát'a. The storm returns, and people assume initially that this is what upsets Kát'a. However, she confesses to Tichon in front of everyone her assignation with Boris during her husband's absence. Then she runs out into the storm.

Evening approaches after the storm has ended. Tichon and a search party are looking for Kát'a. At first among the party, Varvara and Váňa then decide to leave the village for Moscow and start a new life. They leave, and as the searchers continue, Kát'a appears. She knows that her confession has dishonoured her and humiliated Boris. She feels tormented and wants to meet Boris one more time. Boris appears and sees her, and the two embrace. Boris says that his uncle is sending him away to another town, but asks her what will become of her. As her sanity deteriorates, she first begs him to be allowed to accompany him, then insists that she could not and bids him farewell; he leaves in sorrow. After thinking of how nature will continue to flourish over her grave, Kát'a throws herself into the river. Kuligin sees this from the far bank and calls for help. Tichon appears, followed by Kabanicha. Tichon tries to help Kát'a but is restrained by Kabanicha; he blames her for Kát'a's suicide. Dikoj appears with Kát'a's body and lays her on the ground. Tichon cries over the body as, without any emotion, Kabanicha thanks the bystanders—or, as often done, the audience—for their help.

**Fierrabras**, D 796, is a three-act German opera with spoken dialogue written by the composer Franz Schubert in 1823, to a libretto by Joseph Kupelwieser, the general manager of the Theater am Kärntnertor (Vienna's Court Opera Theatre). Like *Alfonso und Estrella* (1822), it marks Schubert's attempt to compose a grand Romantic opera in German, departing from the Singspiel tradition. It had to wait until 1897 for a (relatively) complete performance. The Kärntnertor Theater in 1822 commissioned operas from Schubert and Carl Maria von Weber in a drive to increase the number of German operas in the repertoire. Schubert fulfilled his commission with *Fierrabras*, and Weber his with *Euryanthe*. The Italian theatre director Domenico Barbaja, who had taken over the theatre in 1821, at the same time brought Rossini to Vienna to oversee the production of several of his operas at the Kärntnertor Theater. Rossini's operas were so popular that *Euryanthe* unsuccessfully premiered in October 1823, resulting in the shelving of plans to stage *Fierrabras*, and the resignation of Joseph Kupelwieser as director of the theatre, complaining of "arrogance" on the part of Barbaja. As a result, Schubert never saw the opera staged, or even received payment for his work.

### **The libretto**

The libretto by Kupelwieser is about the adventures of the Moorish knight Fierabras, and his eventual conversion to Christianity. It is based on stories surrounding Charlemagne, including tales of how Fierrabras' sister falls in love with one of Charlemagne's knights, and the love interest between Charlemagne's daughter Emma and another of his knights, Eginhard. Kupelwieser had likely drawn his inspiration from German publications of the tales of Charlemagne.

Kupelwieser, did not have great experience at libretto-writing, submitted the completed libretto to the censors on July 21, 1823, and it was approved on August 19 with minor changes, well after Schubert had started work on the music. Since Kupelwieser, as director of the Kärntnertor Theater, had experience dealing with Prince Metternich's censors, he appears to have engaged in self-censorship to avoid difficulties with the libretto. For example, instead of referring to the partisans in the drama as French and Spanish, he labels them as Franks and Moors. He also referred to a "supreme faith" rather than Christianity.

### **Performance history**

On May 7, 1835 (seven years after Schubert's death), at the Theater in der Josefstadt, Vienna, a concert version of several numbers was staged. The work is generally considered to suffer from an extremely weak libretto. Its first full performance was not until 1897, despite "much magnificent music in Schubert's score", when it was given at the Hoftheater Karlsruhe under the direction of Felix Mottl. The 1897 performance was edited by Mottl for the tastes of the day, resulting in scenes being cut, and ballet interludes injected into the performance.

In the 20th century, the opera received a radio broadcast from Brussels on January 14, 1926. A London concert on November 6, 1938, featured excerpts from the work. An abridged version of the opera was given in a 1959 radio broadcast from Bern, and later issued on record. The first British performance was a BBC Radio 3 broadcast on April 10, 1971.

Concert versions of the opera were presented in 1978 in Perugia, and in 1980 in Aachen, and staged revivals (presumably of the Mottl version) took place in the early 1980s in Philadelphia, Augsburg, and Hermance. In 1988, Claudio Abbado directed performances of a complete staging of the opera (likely the first performances that used all of Schubert's music) at the Theater an der Wien, which formed the basis of the first complete recording of the work. Fierrabras was also performed at La Scala in Milan in the 2022/2023 season. The production had a contemporary approach, with a director who reinterpreted the story while maintaining the romantic essence of the opera, accompanied by an evocative scenography.

### **Instrumentation**

The opera is scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, timpani, and strings.

### **Roles**

Karl, King of the Franks	Robert Holl,	bass
Emma, his daughter	Karita Mattila,	soprano
Eginhard, one of Karl's knights	Robert Gambill,	tenor
Roland, one of Karl's knights	Thomas Hampson,	baritone
Ogier, one of Karl's knights	Peter Svensson,	tenor
Boland, Moorish leader	Laszlo Polgar,	baritone
Fierrabras, Boland's son	Josef Protschka,	tenor
Florinda, Boland's daughter	Cheryl Studer,	soprano

Arnold Schoenberg Choir; Chamber Orchestra of Europe  
 Claudio Abbado, conductor

### **Synopsis**

**Act 1:** Emma, the daughter of King Karl (Charlemagne, from the German name for Charlemagne, Karl der Große), is in love with Eginhard. Their love must be kept secret since Karl does not approve. Karl's knights, led by Roland, have defeated the Moors and captured Fierrabras, the son of the Moorish prince Boland. Karl does not imprison Fierrabras. When they are brought to Karl's castle, Fierrabras spies Emma, and recognizes her as someone he fell in love with in Rome. Eginhard and Emma meet in the garden at night, but are interrupted by Fierrabras. The lovers plead with Fierrabras to protect Eginhard from Karl. Fierrabras agrees, and Eginhard makes his escape. The king approaches, and, thinking Fierrabras is trying to kidnap Emma, has him thrown in chains. As the act ends, Eginhard and the knights are preparing to leave.

**Act 2:** Eginhard (without clarifying the matter concerning Emma and Fierrabras) has been sent to Boland with Roland and Karl's other knights for peace talks. The Moors surprise Eginhard, capture him, and bring him to the Moorish castle, where Boland and his daughter Florinda are concerned over Fierrabras' fate. Eginhard informs them of Fierrabras' imprisonment. The rest of Karl's knights arrive for the peace talks. Boland, upset over Fierrabras' imprisonment, takes them prisoner and condemns them to death. Among the knights, his daughter Florinda recognizes Roland, (with whom she fell in love while in Rome) and decides to try to help them. She manages to free Eginhard, and, after a brief interlude with Roland, frees the knights from the castle prison. The knights, after a battle in which Roland is captured, are returned to the prison, where Boland is upset over Florinda's behaviour.

**Act 3:** Emma, who is waiting for Eginhard's return, confesses to her father that Fierrabras is innocent, and that she and Eginhard are in love. Karl frees Fierrabras, and they leave with Eginhard to go to the Moorish castle to free the imprisoned knights. The knights are being led to the execution pyre. Florinda pleads with Boland to spare Roland. In anger, Boland says that if she loves Roland, she can die with him. Karl, Eginhard, and Fierrabras arrive just in time to stop the executions, and convince Boland to release the knights. Karl and Boland make peace and allow Roland and Florinda to marry, as well as Eginhard and Emma. Fierrabras joins Karl's knights.

### **Luisa Miller                  Verdi**

Luisa Miller is an opera in three acts by Giuseppe Verdi to an Italian libretto by Salvatore Cammarano, based on the play *Kabale und Liebe* (Intrigue and Love) by the German dramatist Friedrich von Schiller.

Verdi's initial idea for a new opera - for which he had a contract going back over several years - was rejected by the Teatro San Carlo in Naples. He attempted to negotiate his way out of this obligation and, when that failed, Cammarano came up with the idea of adapting the Schiller play with which Verdi was familiar. The first performance was in Naples on 8 December 1849.

This was Verdi's 15th opera and it is regarded as beginning the composer's "middle period". It is fair to comment that after this opera, every Verdi opera was a masterpiece.

## Characters

Miller, a retired soldier	baritone	Renato Bruson
Luisa, his daughter	soprano	Katia Ricciarelli
Count Walter	bass	Gwynne Howell
Rodolfo, his son	tenor	Placido Domingo
Federica, Duchess of Ostheim, Walter's niece	contralto	Elena Obraztsova
Wurm, Walter's steward	bass	Wladimiro Ganzarolli

Chorus and Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden,  
Conductor Lorin Maazel.

## Synopsis

Time: Early 17th Century    Place: The Tyrol

### Act 1: Scene 1: A village

On Luisa's birthday, the villagers have gathered outside her house to serenade her. She loves Carlo, a young man she has met in the village (*Lo vidi e 'l primo palpito* / "I saw him and my heart felt its first thrill of love") and looks for him in the crowd. Luisa's father, Miller, is worried by this mysterious love since Carlo is a stranger. Carlo appears and the couple sing of their love (*Duet: t'amo d'amor ch'esprimere* / "I love you with a love that words can only express badly"). As the villagers leave to enter the nearby church, Miller is approached by a courtier, Wurm, who is in love with Luisa and wishes to marry her. But Miller tells him that he will never make a decision against his daughter's will (*Sacra la scelta è d'un consorte* / "The choice of a husband is sacred"). Irritated by his reply, Wurm reveals to Miller that in reality Carlo is Rodolfo, Count Walter's son. Alone, Miller expresses his anger (*Ah fu giusto il mio sospetto* / "Ah! My suspicion was correct").

### Scene 2: Count Walter's castle

Wurm informs the Count of Rodolfo's love for Luisa and Wurm is ordered to summon the son. The Count expresses his frustration with his son (*Il mio sangue la vita darei* / "Oh, everything smiles on me"). When he enters, tells Rodolfo that it is intended that he marry Walter's niece Federica, the Duchess of Ostheim.

When Rodolfo is left alone with Federica, he confesses that he loves another woman, hoping that the duchess will understand. But Federica is too much in love with him to understand (*Duet: Deh! la parola amara perdona al labbro mio* / "Pray forgive my lips for the bitter words").

### Scene 3: Miller's house

Miller tells his daughter who Rodolfo really is. Rodolfo arrives and admits his deception but swears that his love is sincere. Kneeling in front of Miller he declares that Luisa is his bride. Count Walter enters and confronts his son. Drawing his sword, Miller defends his daughter and Walter orders that both father and daughter be arrested. Rodolfo stands up against his father and threatens him: if he does not free the girl, Rodolfo will reveal how Walter became count. Frightened, Walter orders Luisa to be freed.

**Act 2: Scene 1:** A room in Miller's home

Villagers come to Luisa and tell her that her father has been seen being dragged away in chains. Then Wurm arrives and confirms that Miller is to be executed. But he offers her a bargain: her father's freedom in exchange for a letter in which Luisa declares her love for Wurm and states that she has tricked Rodolfo. Initially resisting (*Tu puniscimi, O Signore / "Punish me, o Lord"*), she gives way and writes the letter at the same time being warned that she must keep up the pretense of voluntarily writing the letter and being in love with Wurm. Cursing him (*A brani, a brani, o perfido / "O perfidious wretch"*), Luisa wants only to die.

**Scene 2:** A room in Count Walter's castle

At the castle Walter and Wurm recall how the Count rose to power by killing his own cousin and Wurm reminds the Count how Rodolfo also knows of this. The two men realize that, unless they act together, they may be doomed (*Duet: L'alto retaggio non ho bramato / "The noble inheritance of my cousin"*). Duchess Federica and Luisa enter. The girl confirms the contents of her letter.

**Scene 3:** Rodolfo's rooms

Rodolfo reads Luisa's letter and, ordering a servant to summon Wurm, he laments the happy times which he spent with Luisa (*Quando le sere al placido / "When at eventide, in the tranquil glimmer of a starry sky"*). The young man has challenged Wurm to a duel. To avoid the confrontation the courtier fires his pistol in the air, bringing the Count and his servants running in. Count Walter advises Rodolfo to revenge the offense he has suffered by marrying Duchess Federica. In despair, Rodolfo abandons himself to fate (*L'ara o l'avello apprestami / "Prepare the altar or the grave for me"*).

**Act 3:** A room in Miller's home

In the distance echoes of the celebration of Rodolfo and Federica's wedding can be heard. Old Miller, freed from prison, comes back home. He enters his house and embraces his daughter, then reads the letter she has prepared for Rodolfo. Luisa is determined to take her own life (*La tomba è un letto sparso di fiori / "The grave is a bed strewn with flowers"*), but Miller manages to persuade her to stay with him. (*Duet: La figlia, vedi, pentita / "Your child, see, repentant"*). Alone now, Luisa continues praying. Rodolfo slips in and unseen pours poison into the water jug on the table. He then asks Luisa if she really wrote the letter in which she declared her love for Wurm. "Yes," the girl replies. Rodolfo drinks a glass of water and passes a glass to Luisa, inviting her to drink. Then he tells her that they are both condemned to die. Before she dies, Luisa has time to tell Rodolfo the truth about the letter (*Duet: Ah piangi; il tuo dolore / "Weep your sorrow is more justified"*). Miller returns and comforts his dying daughter; together the three say their prayers and farewells (*Trio, Luisa: Padre, ricevi l'estremo addio / "Father, receive my last farewell"; Rodolfo: Ah! tu perdona il fallo mio / "Oh, forgive my sin"; Miller: O figlia, o vita del cor paterno / "Oh, child, life of your father's heart"*). As she dies, peasants enter with Count Walter and Wurm and before he too dies, Rodolfo runs his sword through Wurm's breast declaring to his father *La pena tua mira / "Look on your punishment"*.