

OPERAS FOR JUNE 2022

1 June	La Traviata	Giuseppe Verdi
8	Il mondo della luna	Josef Haydn
15	Salome	Richard Strauss
22	Maskarade	Carl Nielsen
29	Flavio	George Frideric Handel

La traviata (The Fallen Woman) is an opera in three acts by Giuseppe Verdi set to an Italian libretto by Francesco Maria Piave. It is based on *La Dame aux camélias* (1852), a play adapted from the novel by Alexandre Dumas fils. The opera was originally titled *Violetta*, after the main character. It was first performed on 6 March 1853 at the La Fenice opera house in Venice.

Roles

Violetta Valéry, a courtesan	soprano
Alfredo Germont, a young bourgeois from a provincial family	tenor
Giorgio Germont, Alfredo's father	baritone
Flora Bervoix, Violetta's friend	mezzo-soprano
Annina, Violetta's maid	soprano
Gastone de Letorières, Alfredo's friend	tenor
Barone Douphol, Violetta's lover, a rival of Alfredo	baritone
Marchese d'Obigny	bass
Dottore Grenvil	bass
Giuseppe, Violetta's servant	tenor
Flora's servant	bass
Commissioner	bass

Synopsis

Place: Paris and its vicinity.

Time: Beginning of the 19th century

Act 1: The salon in Violetta's house

Violetta Valéry, a famed courtesan, throws a lavish party at her Paris salon to celebrate her recovery from an illness. Gastone, a viscount, has brought with him a friend, Alfredo Germont, a young bourgeois from a provincial family who has long adored Violetta from afar. While walking to the salon, Gastone tells Violetta that Alfredo loves her, and that while she was ill, he came to her house every day. Alfredo joins them, admitting the truth of Gastone's remarks.

Baron Douphol, Violetta's current lover, waits nearby to escort her to the salon; once there, the Baron is asked to give a toast, but refuses, and the crowd turns to Alfredo, who agrees to sing a brindisi – a drinking song (Alfredo, Violetta, chorus: *Libiamo ne' lieti calici* – "Let's drink from the joyful cups").

From the next room, the sound of the orchestra is heard and the guests move there to dance. After a series of severe coughs and almost fainting, Violetta begins to feel dizzy and asks her guests to go ahead and to leave her to rest until she recovers. While the guests dance in the next room, Violetta looks at her pale face in her mirror. Alfredo enters and expresses his

concern for her fragile health, later declaring his love for her (Alfredo, Violetta: Un dì, felice, eterea – "One day, happy and ethereal"). At first, she rejects him because his love means nothing to her, but there is something about Alfredo that touches her heart. He is about to leave when she gives him a flower, telling him to return it when it has wilted, which will be the very next day.

After the guests leave, Violetta wonders if Alfredo could actually be the one in her life (Violetta: È strano! ... Ah, fors' è lui – "Ah, perhaps he is the one"). But she concludes that she needs freedom to live her life (Violetta, Alfredo: Sempre libera – "Always free"). From off stage, Alfredo's voice is heard singing about love as he walks down the street.

Act 2 Scene 1: Violetta's country house outside Paris

Three months later, Alfredo and Violetta are living together in a peaceful country house outside Paris. Violetta has fallen in love with Alfredo and she has completely abandoned her former life. Alfredo sings of their happy life together (Alfredo: De' miei bollenti spiriti / Il giovanile ardore – "The youthful ardour of my ebullient spirits"). Annina, the maid, arrives from Paris, and, when questioned by Alfredo, tells him that she went there to sell the horses, carriages and everything owned by Violetta to support their country lifestyle.

Alfredo is shocked to learn this and leaves for Paris immediately to settle matters himself. Violetta returns home and receives an invitation from her friend, Flora, to a party in Paris that evening. Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont, is announced and demands that she break off her relationship with his son for the sake of his family, since he reveals that Violetta's relationship with Alfredo has threatened his daughter's engagement (Giorgio: Pura siccome un angelo, Iddio mi diè una figlia – "Pure as an angel, God gave me a daughter") because of Violetta's reputation. Meanwhile, he reluctantly becomes impressed by Violetta's nobility, something which he did not expect from a courtesan. She responds that she cannot end the relationship because she loves him so much, but Giorgio pleads with her for the sake of his family. With growing remorse, she finally agrees (Violetta, Giorgio: Dite alla giovine, sì bella e pura, – "Tell the young girl, so beautiful and pure,") and says goodbye to Giorgio. In a gesture of gratitude for her kindness and sacrifice, Giorgio kisses her forehead before leaving her weeping alone.

Violetta gives a note to Annina to send to Flora accepting the party invitation and, as she is writing a farewell letter to Alfredo, he enters. She can barely control her sadness and tears; she tells him repeatedly of her unconditional love (Violetta: Amami, Alfredo, amami quant'io t'amo – "Love me, Alfredo, love me as I love you"). Before rushing out and setting off for Paris, she hands the farewell letter to her servant to give to Alfredo.

Soon, the servant brings the letter to Alfredo and, as soon as he has read it, Giorgio returns and attempts to comfort his son, reminding him of his family in Provence (Giorgio: Di Provenza il mar, il suol chi dal cor ti cancellò? – "Who erased the sea, the land of Provence from your heart?"). Alfredo suspects that the Baron is behind his separation with Violetta, and the party invitation, which he finds on the desk, strengthens his suspicions. He decides to confront Violetta at the party. Giorgio tries to stop Alfredo, but he rushes out.

Scene 2: Party at Flora's house

At the party, the Marquis tells Flora that Violetta and Alfredo have separated, much to the amazement of everyone who had previously seen the happy couple. She calls for the entertainers to perform for the guests (Chorus: Noi siamo zingarelle venute da lontano – "We

are gypsy girls who have come from afar"; Di Madride noi siam mattadori – "We are matadors from Madrid"). Gastone and his friends join the matadors and sing (Gastone, chorus, dancers: È Piquillo un bel gagliardo Biscaglino mattador – "Piquillo is a bold and handsome matador from Biscay").

Violetta arrives with Baron Douphol. They see Alfredo at the gambling table. When he sees them, Alfredo loudly proclaims that he will take Violetta home with him. Feeling annoyed, the Baron goes to the gambling table and joins him in a game. As they bet, Alfredo wins some large sums until Flora announces that supper is ready. Alfredo leaves with handfuls of money.

As everyone is leaving the room, Violetta has asked Alfredo to see her. Fearing that the Baron's anger will lead him to challenge Alfredo to a duel, she gently asks Alfredo to leave. Alfredo misunderstands her apprehension and demands that she admit that she loves the Baron. In grief, she makes that admission and, furiously, Alfredo calls the guests to witness what he has to say (Questa donna conoscete? – "You know this woman?"). He humiliates and denounces Violetta in front of the guests and then throws his winnings at her feet in payment for her services. She faints onto the floor. The guests reprimand Alfredo: Di donne ignobile insultatore, di qua allontanati, ne desti orror! ("Ignoble insulter of women, go away from here, you fill us with horror!").

In search of his son, Giorgio enters the hall and, knowing the real significance of the scene, denounces his son's behavior (Giorgio, Alfredo, Violetta, chorus: Di sprezzo degno sè stesso rende chi pur nell'ira la donna offende. – "A man, who even in anger, offends a woman renders himself deserving of contempt.").

Flora and the ladies attempt to persuade Violetta to leave the dining room, but Violetta turns to Alfredo: Alfredo, Alfredo, di questo core non puoi comprendere tutto l'amore... – "Alfredo, Alfredo, you can't understand all the love in this heart...".

Act 3: Violetta's bedroom

Dr. Grenvil tells Annina that Violetta will not live long since her tuberculosis has worsened. Alone in her room, Violetta reads a letter from Alfredo's father telling her that the Baron was only wounded in his duel with Alfredo. He has informed Alfredo of the sacrifice she has made for him and his sister; and that he is sending his son to see her as quickly as possible to ask for her forgiveness. But Violetta senses it is too late (Violetta: Addio, del passato bei sogni ridenti – "Farewell, lovely, happy dreams of the past").

Annina rushes in the room to tell Violetta of Alfredo's arrival. The lovers are reunited and Alfredo suggests that they leave Paris (Alfredo, Violetta: Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo – "We will leave Paris, O beloved").

But it is too late: she knows her time is up (Alfredo, Violetta: Gran Dio!...morir sì giovane – "Great God!...to die so young"). Alfredo's father enters with the doctor, regretting what he has done. After singing a duet with Alfredo, Violetta suddenly revives, exclaiming that the pain and discomfort have left her. A moment later, she dies in Alfredo's arms.

Further information about the origin of the opera and its various real-life characters may be found here and by following the various links. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_traviata

Il mondo della luna (The World on the Moon), Hob. XXVIII:7, is an opera buffa by Joseph Haydn with a libretto written by Carlo Goldoni in 1750, first performed at Eszterháza, Hungary, on 3 August 1777. Goldoni's libretto had previously been set by six other composers, first by the composer Baldassare Galuppi and performed in Venice in the carnival of 1750. It was then adapted for Haydn's version of the opera, which would be performed during the wedding celebrations of Count Nikolaus Esterházy, the younger son of Haydn's patron, Prince Nikolaus Esterházy, and the Countess Maria Anna Wissenwolf. It is sometimes performed as a singspiel under its German title *Die Welt auf dem Monde*]

Roles

Ecclitico, a would-be astrologer	tenor
Ernesto, a cavalier	contralto castrato
Buonafede	baritone
Clarice, daughter of Buonafede	soprano
Flaminia, another daughter of Buonafede	soprano
Lisetta, maid of Buonafede	mezzo-soprano
Cecco, servant of Ernesto	tenor
Four scholars and noblemen	

The opera is scored for two oboes, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, strings, and continuo.

Synopsis

Act 1: Scene 1: A terrace in the house of the bogus astronomer Ecclitico; an observatory tower with a telescope. A starlit night, with full moon

Ecclitico and his four students sing a hymn to the Moon, and Ecclitico boasts of how he can dupe the foolish – such as Buonafede, who now appears. Buonafede does not have a clue what the Moon is. Ecclitico explains to him that through his powerful telescope he will be able to see the Moon's transparent surface all the way through the houses and able to spy on ladies as they undress before going to bed. Buonafede then attempts to view the Moon through Ecclitico's telescope while Ecclitico's servants move caricatures in front of the telescope's lens. The trick works: Buonafede describes what he thinks he has seen: a very beautiful young girl caressing an old man, a husband ready to punish his wife for her infidelity, and a man who completely dominates his female lover. He rewards Ecclitico with some coins and leaves.

Alone, Ecclitico muses that it is not the old man's money he wants, but to wed his daughter Clarice. Ernesto, a nobleman who is in love with Clarice's sister Flaminia, and his servant Cecco (in love with Buonafede's servant, Lisetta) now join Ecclitico. Buonafede intends to marry the sisters off to rich suitors.

Ecclitico assures Ernesto and Cecco that with a little money all their difficulties will be solved. In a more serious aria ("*Begli occhi vezzosi*"), Ernesto sings of Flaminia's eyes and awaits impatiently the moment in which the two of them will spend their lives together. Cecco, for his part, is convinced that everyone's playing games and insistently points out the comic side of life.

Scene 2: room in Buonafede's house

The sisters Clarice and Flaminia dream of escaping their tyrannical father. In a long aria, Flaminia recognises that even if reason is to dominate the soul, when love intervenes it takes

control of everything. Buonafede mocks Clarice's stubbornness but she answers back, threatening him that she will find a husband for herself if he is not capable of providing one for her. The two sisters are clearly differentiated: Clarice is down to earth and her arias are full of determined pragmatism. Buonafede invites Lisetta (his daughters' maid) to share the wonders he has seen through the telescope, in an attempt to win her over. Interested in his money, she reassures him of her love for him, her fidelity and her virtues, none of which is true. Ecclitico arrives and tells Buonafede that the Emperor of the Moon has invited him to his court. By drinking an elixir he will be transported to the Moon. Buonafede is tempted to travel with him and, therefore, asks for some of the liquor. Ecclitico agrees and, pretending to drink half of it, gives the rest to Buonafede who drinks it, falls asleep, and dreams of flying to the Moon. Clarice and Lisetta believe at first that he is dead, then console themselves with the inheritance they will be getting.

Act 2: Ecclitico's garden, decorated so as to convince Buonafede that he is on the Moon

Ecclitico and Ernesto discuss the progress of their plot, and when Buonafede awakens he is convinced he is on the Moon. He is entertained by a ballet and clothed in elegant gowns. Ecclitico tells him that he will be joined by his daughters and servant. According to lunar custom the women will be meek. Cecco appears disguised as the Emperor of the Moon, with Ernesto as the star Hesperus. Buonafede, delighted with life on the Moon, is entertained by another ballet. When Lisetta enters, Buonafede tries to court her, but Cecco asks her to become Empress of the Moon. Lisetta, not fully aware of the plot, is at first puzzled. The two daughters arrive and pay homage to the Emperor in a nonsense ceremony. Flaminia goes off with Ernesto and Clarice with Ecclitico, while Cecco prepares to crown Lisetta as Empress. In the confusion of the masquerade, Buonafede is tricked into consenting to the three marriages, only realising that he has been duped when it is too late.

Act 3: Scene 1: A room in Ecclitico's house

The conspirators, back in normal dress, have locked Buonafede in his own house – the price of his freedom will be forgiveness for his daughters and their dowries. At last he yields.

Scene 2: A starlit night with a full moon

Clarice and Ecclitico sing of their love. Buonafede repents of his previous strictness and there is general rejoicing and celebration.

Salome: Richard Strauss

Based on a play by Oscar Wilde written in French and translated into German by Hedwig Lachmann.

Time: A.D. Place: 30Judea.

The opera is in one Act of four scenes.

From the moonlit terrace of King Herod's palace, Narraboth, captain of the guard, gazes rapturously inside at the Princess Salome, who is feasting with her stepfather and his court. The voice of the prophet Jochanaan echoes from a deep cistern, where he is imprisoned by the king, who fears him. Salome, bored with Herod's lechery and his coarse guests, rushes out for fresh air and becomes curious when she hears Jochanaan curse Herodias, her mother. When the soldiers refuse to bring Jochanaan to her, Salome turns her wiles on Narraboth, who orders that Jochanaan be summoned. Salome is fascinated by the prophet's deathly pallor and pours out her uncontrollable desire to touch him. The prophet rejects her, speaking of the

Son of God who will come to save mankind. When Salome continues to beg for Jochanaan's kiss, Narraboth stabs himself in horror, and the prophet descends into the cistern, urging her to seek salvation in the Messiah. The girl collapses in frustration and longing.

Herod appears, followed by his court. When he slips in Narraboth's blood, he becomes unnerved and begins to experience hallucinations, which Herodias scorns. Herod's thoughts turn to Salome, who spurns his attentions. Renewed abuse from Jochanaan's subterranean voice harasses Herodias, who demands that Herod turn the prophet over to the Jews. Herod's refusal incurs an argument among several Jews concerning the nature of God, and a narrative of Christ's miracles by two Nazarenes.

Herod begs Salome to divert him by dancing and offers her anything she might wish in return. Salome makes him swear he will live up to his promise, then dances, slowly shedding seven veils and finishing her performance at his feet. Salome demands the head of Jochanaan on a silver platter, ignoring Herod's desperate alternatives - jewels, rare birds, a sacred veil. The terrified king finally gives in. After a tense pause, the arm of the executioner rises from the cistern, offering the head to Salome. As clouds obscure the moon, Salome seizes her reward passionately, addressing Jochanaan as if he lived and triumphantly kissing his lips. Overcome with revulsion, Herod orders the soldiers to kill Salome.

Maskarade: Carl Nielsen

Maskarade (Masquerade) is an opera in three acts by Carl Nielsen to a Danish libretto by Vilhelm Andersen, based on the comedy by Ludvig Holberg. It was first performed on 11 November 1906 at Det Kongelige Teater, Copenhagen. Maskarade has enjoyed enduring popularity in Denmark where it is considered to be the country's national opera.

Background and performance history

Nielsen first considered writing an opera based on Holberg's play Maskarade around the turn of the 20th century. He contacted Vilhelm Andersen (1864–1953) whom he knew from his student days, hoping to persuade him to write a libretto. Andersen initially refused but finally agreed, allowing Nielsen to start composing in May 1904. The Royal Theatre scheduled the opera even before it was finished. In fact, Nielsen only completed the overture on 3 November, a week before the opera's premiere.

The world premiere of Maskarade took place at Det Kongelige Teater in Copenhagen on 11 November 1906. It was a resounding success from the start with an exceptional run of 25 performances over its first four months. Reviews in the press were however mixed, the consensus being that the first act was the best, the second was rather weak and the third lacked theatrical clarity although the music was brilliant. Announcement of plans to turn Holberg's classical comedy into an opera buffa met with dismay in Danish literary circles, but the opera was immediately popular, more so than the play itself. Now considered to be Denmark's national opera, it has enjoyed lasting success in the country, attributable to its many strophic songs, its dances and its underlying "old Copenhagen" atmosphere. In 2006, Denmark's Ministry of Culture named it one of Denmark's twelve greatest musical works.

The opera did not premiere in the United States until 1972 when it was performed by St. Paul Opera in Minnesota, conducted by Igor Buketoff. The first reported New York performance

was by the Bronx Opera Company in 1983. It was performed in the US again in 2014, when it had its Chicago premiere on 18 January at the Vittum Theater performed by the Vox3 Collective. Maskarade received a major international revival in 2005 in a new production by David Pountney which was performed at the Bregenz Festival in August of that year and travelled to the Royal Opera House the following month for its first performance by the company. The opera had been previously performed in the UK at London's Morley College in 1983 and in Leeds by Opera North in 1990.

Despite its popularity in his home country, Nielsen was not entirely satisfied with the work, citing structural weakness in the final two acts; but he never got around to revising the work. The overture and the ballet from the third act ("Dance of the Cockerels") are performed frequently, as noted by the Carl Nielsen Society, which states that the overture is one of Nielsen's most widely performed works at concerts in Europe and North America.

Roles

Jeronimus, a citizen of Copenhagen	bass baritone
Magdelone, his wife	alto or mezzo soprano
Leander, their son	tenor
Henrik, Leander's valet	bass baritone
Arv, Jeronimus' servant	tenor
Leonard, a citizen of Slagelse	tenor or baritone
Leonora, his daughter	soprano
Pernille, Leonora's maid	soprano or mezzo-soprano
Mask Vendor	baritone
Doorman at the Playhouse	bass
A Tutor	bass
Night Watchman	bass
Master of the Masquerade	bass
Maskarade	Carl Nielsen

Synopsis

The action takes place in Copenhagen in the spring of 1723.

Act One: Five o'clock in the afternoon. Leander and his servant Henrik slowly awake after attending the masquerade at the playhouse the night before. Henrik is delighted to hear that Leander intends to go again that evening, but is concerned to hear the reason: that Leander has fallen in love with a girl he met there. Henrik reminds him that Jeronimus, his father, has arranged for him to marry Herr Leonard's daughter (whom he has never seen) and warns him that he risks a legal action for breach of promise. Magdelone, Leander's mother appears, and confesses that she too would like to go to the masquerade. She demonstrates to the young men that her dancing days are by no means over. This exhibition is interrupted by Jeronimus, who angrily forbids anyone to attend the masquerade. When he hears that Leander has not yet paid a formal visit to Leonard to propose marriage to his daughter he dismisses Leander and Henrik, then launches into a furious condemnation of the masquerades and the general decline in public morality which they represent. Henrik announces the arrival of Herr Leonard. In a state of great embarrassment, Leonard confesses that his daughter is unwilling to marry Leander, having fallen in love with some young man she met at the masquerade. The two fathers realise that their problems are identical and commiserate with one another.

Jeronimus orders his servant Arv to keep watch that night to prevent anyone leaving the house and calls Leander and Henrik back into the room. When challenged, Henrik provides a spirited defence of the masquerades: in a country with a dismal climate they offer a chance of pleasure where rich and poor can mingle in a state of equality. Jeronimus is not impressed. He dictates to Leander and Henrik the apology they must offer to Leonard: furthermore, he demands that Leander shall marry Leonard's daughter on the following day at three o'clock. Leander protests that he will never do so. He and Henrik insist on their right to amuse themselves; Jeronimus, echoed by Arv, equally insists that they shall not; Leonard appears to agree with Jeronimus but secretly wishes that he too could attend the masquerade.

Act Two: The evening of the same day, in the street between Jeronimus' house and the playhouse. A nightwatchman passes, calling out eight o'clock. Arv, according to Jeronimus' instructions, is standing guard. He at first tries to protect himself against evil spirits by singing a hymn, then falls to remembering the various pleasures of the kitchen. Henrik springs out at him, disguised as a ghost and demands that he confess his sins. In his superstitious terror, Arv lists his various thefts from the kitchen, ending with that of the kitchenmaid's virginity. This delights Henrik, who promises not to tell anyone if Arv will let him and Leander out of the house without telling Jeronimus. Groups of students, soldiers and young girls appear on their way to the playhouse, teasing Arv as they pass by. Leonard furtively comes into the street, but on meeting Arv, tells him that he is on his way home. Henrik and Leander now emerge from the house. Leander compares the dark, old house of his father with the brightness and joy to be found in the playhouse. Into the street there now comes a sedan chair with two masked ladies. One is the girl that Leander met the previous evening, the other is her maid. The two young lovers renew their protestations of love, while the maid instructs Henrik on the respect with which she expects him to treat her. All four go into the playhouse. There is a commotion in the old house: Jeronimus has discovered that Leander and Henrik have gone. He attempts to get into the playhouse, but is turned away at the door: only people wearing masks are allowed to enter. He drags Arv with him into a nearby mask-vendor's shop. While they are engaged there, Magdelone, masked, creeps into the street, where she encounters Leonard, also masked. Unaware of one another's identity, they enter the playhouse together. Jeronimus and Arv emerge, transformed, from the mask-vendor's shop: Jeronimus is dressed as Bacchus, Arv as Cupid. Jeronimus, denouncing the masquerade and all its evils, storms into the playhouse with the timid Arv in tow. As the watchman calls out nine o'clock, music is heard coming from the playhouse.

Act Three: The great hall of the brilliantly lit playhouse, where the masquerade is in full swing. After a stirring opening chorus, the Master of the Masquerade announces the Cotillion, during which girls call out flirtatiously to a group of students who are with their tutor. A boy passes selling oranges and roses. Henrik is accosted by three of the girls he flirted with the previous evening; they reproach him for his fickleness. Leander, dressed as a shepherd, and his beloved, dressed as the goddess of flowers, finally exchange names: she is called Leonora, and they vow that their names will be linked together for ever. Henrik and the maid Pernille also declare their love, though in a less elevated style. Leonard and Magdelone pass by: he flirts gallantly with her, though she is terrified of being recognised. They are approached by Jeronimus, who at first thinks the masked couple might be Leander and his girl; but he apologises when he realises his mistake, although still failing to recognise who

they really are. A threatened quarrel between some students and army officers is interrupted when the Master of the Masquerade announces a big formal dance: the Dance of the Cockerels. As it finishes, Henrik tells Leander that the grotesque figure dressed as Bacchus is his father Jeronimus. He explains Leander's predicament to the Tutor, who agrees to distract Jeronimus by making him drunk. Arv has recognised Henrik, but promises silence when Henrik threatens to reveal his depredations in the kitchen. There follows a divertissement, in which the Dancing-Master and the Ballerina mime the loves of Mars and Venus, after which the Tutor and the students sing a song in praise of Bacchus. During a further dance, Jeronimus, by now rather drunk, makes clumsy advances to the Ballerina, but is warned off by the jealous Dancing-Master. Proceedings are halted by the appearance of the Master of the Masquerade in the guise of Corporal Mors, a grim reminder of the transience of all earthly pleasure. It is time for a general unmasking. A sense of melancholy falls over the gathering as one by one the masqueraders remove their disguises. First are Magdelone and Leonard; then Leander and Leonora; then in turn Henrik, Pernille, Arv and Jeronimus. Jeronimus is enraged when he discovers his son with Leonora, but even more surprised to discover his wife with Leonard. The awkward situation is soon resolved, however: Leonora turns out to be none other than Leonard's daughter, the very girl Jeronimus wishes his son Leander to marry!

Flavio, re de' Longobardi ("Flavio, King of the Lombards", HWV 16) is an opera seria in three acts by George Frideric Handel. The Italian-language libretto was by Nicola Francesco Haym, after Matteo Noris's *Flavio Cuniberto*. It was Handel's fourth full-length opera for the Royal Academy of Music. Handel had originally entitled the opera after the character of Emilia in the opera.

Flavio is unusually concise for an opera by Handel of this period. It is also notable as a skilful blend of tragedy and comedy, both in the text and the music, and for being one of Handel's few operas to feature leading roles for all major voice categories of his day – soprano, contralto, castrato, tenor and bass.

Performance history

Handel completed the score only seven days before the premiere, at the King's Theatre in the Haymarket on 14 May 1723. There were eight performances in the premiere run. The work was revived on 18 April 1732, under the direction of the composer, for four performances.

There were no further revivals until it was rediscovered and performed in Göttingen on 2 July 1967. The first UK performance since Handel's time was on 26 August 1969 at the Unicorn Theatre in Abingdon-on-Thames, England. As with all Baroque opera seria, *Flavio* went unperformed for many years, but with the revival of interest in Baroque music and historically informed musical performance since the 1960s, *Flavio*, like all Handel operas, receives performances at festivals and opera houses today. Among other productions, *Flavio* was performed at the New York City Opera in 2007 and by English Touring Opera in 2009.

Roles

Flavio	alto castrato
Guido	alto castrato
Emilia	soprano
Vitige	soprano
Teodata	contralto

Lotario	bass
Ugone	tenor

Synopsis

Flavio, King of Lombardy, is also King of Britain. He has two trusted, elderly counsellors, Lotario and Ugone. Lotario's daughter Emilia is engaged to Ugone's son, Guido. Ugone has another daughter, Teodata, who is young and famous for her great beauty. Teodata has a secret boyfriend, Vitige, courtier of the King.

Act 1: Vitige slips away from his sweetheart Teodata's bedroom as dawn breaks. The two take a tender farewell of each other.

Guido and Emilia are married in a ceremony with their immediate families present. The newly married couple sing of their happiness and look forward to the wedding party that evening.

Ugone presents his daughter Teodata to the King. Flavio is greatly struck by her beauty and suggests she become lady-in-waiting to the Queen (who does not appear in the opera). King Flavio receives word that his governor in Britain has become incapacitated through illness and needs to be replaced. The King offers the position to his counsellor Lotario, but changes his mind and offers the job to Ugone instead, thinking that with her father out of the way, he will more easily be able to seduce his lovely daughter Teodata. Lotario is furious that the King has backtracked on the prime position he was offered.

Flavio praises the beauty of Teodata to his courtier Vitige, whom the King does not realise is Teodata's secret lover. Vitige tries to play down her attraction, telling the King that he doesn't think she is at all pleasing to look at. This produces no effect on the King's ardour, however.

Ugone tells his son Guido that he has been gravely insulted by Lotario, who has slapped him across the face. His honour demands that he fight a duel, but he is too old now, and demands that his son do so in his stead. Guido has to agree that his duty demands that he kill the father of his new bride. When Emilia meets up with Guido, he is too ashamed to look her in the eye. She does not understand what is wrong, but declares she will always love him, no matter what.

Act 2: Flavio has ordered the lovely Teodata to come to him and is working on seducing her when her father bursts into the room, protesting about the loss of his honour. The King leaves Ugone with his daughter, who believes, mistakenly, that he must have discovered her clandestine relationship with Vitige and confesses all. This only makes Ugone bewail the loss of his family honour even more.

Lotario tells his daughter Emilia that her marriage to Guido is null and void and demands that she abandon him. She tells Guido what her father is asking her to do, but says she will never cease to love Guido. Guido is torn by his love for her and his duty to avenge the insult to his father.

The King orders his courtier Vitige to go to Teodata, tell her that the King loves her, and bring her to him. Vitige and Teodata decide the best strategy in this difficult situation will be for her not to reject the King but to play along with him.

Guido challenges Lotario to a duel. The older man scornfully accepts, feeling that his greater experience will allow an easy victory, but is mortally wounded. The horrified Emilia finds her dying father in a pool of his own blood. He tells her Guido was responsible, and expires. Emilia vows to be revenged.

Act 3: Emilia and Ugone both go to the King, she demanding justice for her father's murder, he justifying his son's action by his vindication of the insult to him. Flavio says he will consider the matter; really he is more concerned at the moment with trying to seduce Teodata. Vitige brings Teodata to the King and has to listen as Flavio declares she will be his real Queen, which makes him enraged with jealousy.

Emilia confronts Guido, who gives her his sword and tells her to run him through. She takes the sword but is unable to kill him and leaves.

Vitige and Teodata have a quarrel about her treatment of the King as Flavio listens unobserved. She points out that Vitige told her to play along with Flavio, but Vitige says he did not mean that she should go that far. Flavio comes out of his hiding place, declares they have both deceived him and they will be punished.

Flavio now realises that he will have to show wise judgement like a good King. He sends for Emilia and tells her that he has followed her desire; he has had Guido decapitated for killing her father and in fact she can see the severed head right away. Emilia swoons away and while she is unconscious the King has Guido come to her side so that when she revives they are joyously reunited.

He sends for Vitige and tells him that his punishment will be that he will have to marry the girl who he does not think is nice to look at, Teodata, and presents her to him.

So both pairs of lovers will marry, Ugone will go to Britain to take up his position as governor, and Flavio remain faithful to his wife.