

“Pari siamo” (How alike we are!) RIGOLETTO, Giuseppe Verdi, libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, based on a play by Victor Hugo, *Le roi s’amuse* (The King is Amused) Act I, 1851.

SYNOPSIS: Rigoletto, court jester to the decadent and womanizing Duke of Mantua, meets an assassin for hire, Sparafucile, who offers his services to the bitter, deformed elderly man. After refusing the killer’s services for the moment, Rigoletto reflects on the similarities between Sparafucile and himself and muses over his unhappy life at court.

RIGOLETTO

Pari siamo! Io la lingua Egli ha il pugnale. L’uomo son io che ride, Ei quel che spegne! Quel vecchio maledivami! O uomini, o natura! Vil scellerato mi faceste voi! scoundrel! O rabbia! Esser difforme! O rabbia! Esser buffone! Non dover, non poter altro che ridere. Il retaggio d’ogni uom m’è tolto-- il pianto! Questo padrone mio, Giovin, giocondo, sì possente, bello, and handsome, Sonnecchiando mi dice: Fa' ch'io rida, buffone! Forzarmi deggio e farlo! Oh dannazione Odio a voi, cortigiani schernitori! Quanta in mordervi ho gioia! Se iniquo son, per cagion vostra è solo Ma in altr'uomo qui mi cangio... Quel vecchio maledivami!... Tal pensiero., Perché conturba ognor la mente mia? Mi coglierà sventura?... Ah no, è follia!	How alike we are! I use the tongue, He, the dagger. I’m the man who laughs, He’s the one who stabs. How that old fellow cursed me! Oh, mankind, oh, Nature! You have made me an evil What torment to be deformed! What torment to be a buffoon! I may not, cannot, do anything but laugh. Every man’s refuge is denied me— even crying... That man who is my master, youthful, happy, so strong half-asleep, he tells me, “Make me laugh, old jester.” I force myself to do it Oh, damnation! How I detest you, scoffing courtiers! How much joy it is to mock you! If I’am vile, it’s you alone who caused it. You changed me into another man... How that old fellow cursed me! Such an image, why does it keep troubling my mind? Will something bad befall me?? Ah, no! That’s madness!
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--From a course for Osher Lifelong Learners (OLLI), at UC Santa Cruz, “High Artistry, LorwVoices,” 2015

“Re dell’abisso.” **UN BALLO IN MASCHERA**, Act I, sc.2, “

ULRICA:

Re dell’abisso, affrettati,
Precipta per l’etra.
Senza librar la folgore
Il tetto mio penetra.
Omai tre volte l’upupa
Dall’alto sospirò
La salamandra ignivora
Tre volte sibilò.

King of the ocean,
Hurry here through the spheres.
Without releasing your lightning,
Enter my humble abode.
Already three times, the owl
has sadly sighed on high,
The fire-eating salamander
has three times hissed his cry.