

“Questa o quella” (This girl, that girl) RIGOLETTO, ACT I, music by Giuseppe Verdi, libretto by Francesco Maria Piave, 1851, based on the play by Victor Hugo, “Le roi s’amuse” (The King is Entertained)

SYNOPSIS: The lecherous Duke of Mantua presides over a decadent court, in which Rigoletto is his cynical jester. In this introductory aria, the Duke expresses his misogynistic views about women, whom he considers his disposable playthings.

DUKE:

Questa o quella per me pari sono.
a quant' altre d' intorno mi vedo,
del mio core l' impero non cedo
meglio ad una che ad altre beltà.
La costoro avvenenza è qual dono
di che il fato ne infiora la vita.
S' oggi questa mi torna gradita
forse un' altra doman lo sarà.

This girl, that girl, they're just the same to me;
to all of the beauties around me,
I won't give control of my heart
more to one than to anyone else.
Their attractiveness is but a gift
given by fate to embellish our lives.
If today this one appeals to me
by tomorrow, I may find someone else.

La costanza tiranna del core
detestiamo qual morbo crudele,
sol chi vuole si serbi fedele;
Non v'ha amor se non v'è libertà.
De' i mariti il geloso furore,
degli amanti le smanie derido,
anco d' Argo i cent'occhi disfido
•se mi punge una qualche beltà.

We hate constancy, tyrant of the heart;
we detest it like a cruel plague.
Let them be faithful who choose to do so.
There is no love if freedom is gone.
I mock the rage of jealous husbands,
scorn true lovers' valid complaints,
and defy the hundred eyes of Argus,
if I fancy a beautiful girl..

--From “Verdi and Puccini,” a lecture for the Santa Cruz Opera Society, Inc. (SCOSI),
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