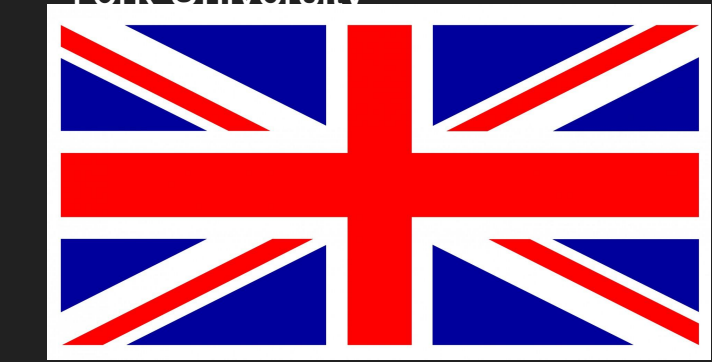


Celebrating Canadian History Through Italian Opera



Abstract

The production of Italian opera can be used to mark the past and celebrate the present. Giuseppe Verdi's operas *La Traviata* and *Don Carlos* challenge social norms and give voice to the oppressed. These operas highlight women and the social pressures they were experiencing, showing personal struggle and sacrifice in an effort to bend to tradition. A creative production of these operas draws from Canadian history and is relevant in 2017. The setting for *La Traviata* is changed to Dawson City during the time of the Klondike Gold Rush. *Don Carlos* is set in Regina, Saskatchewan during the time of the North-West Rebellion.



La Traviata Synopsis

The beautiful courtesan Violetta Valery meets Alfredo Germont and moves to the country with him. Alfredo's father, Germont, tells Violetta that she must leave Alfredo because her reputation is tainting their family. She goes without telling Alfredo her reason. They meet at a party and Alfredo insults Violetta. As Violetta is dying she re-reads a letter from Germont who has revealed to Alfredo why Violetta left him. Alfredo arrives and begs Violetta to leave Paris with him. Germont who is truly sorry for interfering in his son's life. Violetta says goodbye to Alfredo and dies in his arms.

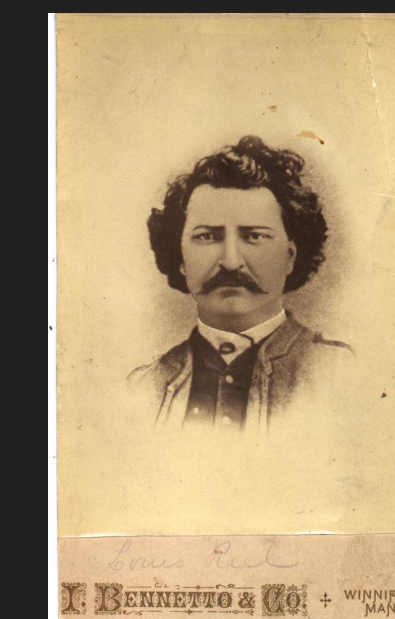


Production: Klondike Gold Rush

La Traviata could be set in Dawson City during the time of the Klondike Gold Rush with Violetta as a popular prostitute working in a brothel owned by Baron Douphol and Alfredo as an upper class investor.

Giuseppe Verdi

La Traviata and *Don Carlos* highlight women caught between following tradition and choosing love. Verdi's interest in the social pressure women were under may have come from his personal life. After the death of his wife and two children, Verdi was harshly criticized for living with soprano Giuseppina Strepponi prior to their marriage.



Louis Riel



Don Carlos



Elizabeth



Rodrigo

Don Carlos Synopsis

Spanish prince Don Carlos and French princess Elizabeth are in love but to keep peace between the two countries Elizabeth must marry Carlo's father, King Philip. Carlo's and his friend Rodrigo help free the Flemish people from Spanish oppression. Carlo is charged with treason. Before his arrest he says goodbye to Elizabeth. Carlo's grandfather appears from his tomb and pulls Carlo in with him saying suffering will only stop in heaven.

Production: Regina, 1867

Don Carlos could be set in Regina, Saskatchewan in 1867. The three groups of people would be the British, the Canadian government, and the Metis. The opera would span the years of the North-West Rebellion and include the hanging of Louis Riel.

Conclusion

Setting Italian operas in Canada gives perspective on the many social and political changes taking place during the 19th century and connects Canadian history with the beauty and richness of opera.