

The Cleveland Opera presents  
three performances of *La traviata*

by Mike Telin



In their upcoming production of Verdi's masterpiece *La traviata* or "The Fallen Woman," [The Cleveland Opera](#) celebrates the city's Golden Age with sets and costuming inspired by Art Deco from the Great Gatsby Era of the Roaring Twenties. "Cleveland made such a big statement in the arts during that time period," the company's executive artistic director Dorota Sobieska said by telephone. "When you think about the momentum that the city had at that time, it's phenomenal."

Sobieska said that the venues they have selected also reflect Cleveland circa 1920s.

Performances will take place on Wednesday, March 14 at 7:00 pm at the Polish-American

Cultural Center, Friday, March 16 at 7:30 pm at First Baptist Church, and Sunday, March 18 at 3:30 pm at The Tudor Arms Hotel Grand Ballroom. The cast includes Dorota Sobieska as the courtesan Violetta Valéry, Timothy Culver as Alfredo Germont, and Brian Keith Johnson as Giorgio Germont. The opera will be sung in Italian with English subtitles. Tickets are available [online](#).

The production is presented in collaboration with the Cleveland Women's Orchestra under the baton of Robert Cronquist. "We should be proud that we have an organization like the Cleveland Women's Orchestra," Sobieska said. "It was formed shortly after that era and is still doing so well."

The soprano said that although people may think of *La traviata* as being grand opera, there is a lot of latitude in the libretto and the music, making it adaptable to smaller stages. "We think of this opera as huge because of its emotional impact, but in terms

of its size it has a lot of flexibility. The opening scene could be a hundred-person party or it could be an eight-person dinner party at your home.”



Speaking of that opening scene, Sobieska said, “One of the spaces we are using — the Tudor Arms, which I didn’t know about until Bob and Joan Cronquist took me there — is like a built-in set with its chandeliers, big windows, and all the glory of its interior. That party could have taken place there.”

Musically the opera provides the role of Violetta with many memorable arias and duets. Does Sobieska have a favorite? “That’s a difficult question, but I think it’s the duet with Giorgio, Alfredo’s father, at the country house during Act Two, Scene One. It’s a big statement. There’s a transformation from not understanding to facing the reality of the situation. It’s long, but there are so many beautiful moments, and you have to figure out how to bring out a variety of emotions to make it interesting.” Click [here](#) to read a synopsis.

Sobieska noted that the tragic story of *La traviata* fits into today’s #MeToo movement. “In those days, like now, women were taken advantage of. A ‘Fallen Woman!’ What a tag. Have you ever heard of a fallen man? And yet women were taken advantage of *because* they were women. The other side of the coin is the jewelry, the parties, and the wine, but the suffering is delegated to women.”

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