Fedora

melodramma in three acts

libretto di **Arturo Colautti**
from Victorien Sardou drama
music by **Umberto Giordano**

premiere: Milano, Teatro Lirico Internazionale, 17 November 1898
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ATTO FIRST

Drawing room in Count Vladimir's house.

The servants are playing cards and drinking while awaiting the return of their master, who is celebrating his last night as a bachelor. The following day, he is to marry the wealthy Princess Fedora, a match that will allow him to put his finances in order. Suddenly, the doorbell rings repeatedly. It is Fedora herself, who has come to find out why her fiancé has failed to meet her at the theatre. The page, Dimitri, rushes off to look for the count at his club, while Fedora fondly contemplates a portrait of Vladimir. Dimitri returns, announcing that the master's sleigh has arrived. Fedora's joy turns to anguish when she sees Grech, a police officer, and two servants enter carrying a wounded Vladimir. They are followed by the diplomat De Siriex. The count is carried to his bedroom, and Grech questions everyone present in an attempt to reconstruct the circumstances of the shooting. Cirillo, the coachman, is summoned. He explains that he accompanied his master to the park, heard two shots and saw a bloodstained man fleeing. Cirillo called for help, and De Siriex, who happened to be passing by in his own sleigh, followed the bloodstains and found Vladimir wounded and unconscious in a secluded villa. Beside him lay his revolver, which he always carried, knowing that, as the son of a police general, he was threatened by nihilists. Further investigations reveal that earlier that day the villa's elderly tenant had delivered a letter to Vladimir. However, the letter has disappeared from the drawer where it had been kept. Dimitri recalls that, a few hours earlier, a gentleman who had come looking for Vladimir had sat in the drawing room for a few minutes before suddenly fleeing. This mysterious visitor was Loris Ipanov, who lives across the street. Suspicion falls on him, and Grech leaves with his men to search for him. Meanwhile, Vladimir breathes his last. As Fedora kneels in despair, Grech returns with the news that Ipanov has disappeared.

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ATTO SECOND

Drawing room in Fedora's house in Paris.

Assisted by Loris, Fedora serves tea to her numerous guests. Her friend, Countess Olga, introduces her protégé, Lazinski, a Polish

émigré pianist.

De Siriex arrives and is surprised to find the hostess on such friendly terms with Loris. Taking him aside, Fedora explains that she has deliberately won Loris's trust and made him fall in love with her. She is simply waiting for the right moment to obtain his confession and proof of the crime. Meanwhile, Olga chats with Baron Rouvel, while Dr Borov warns Loris to be wary of the princess. As the light-hearted conversation continues, Fedora takes Loris's arm and strolls around the room. Loris expresses his devotion and his hope that his feelings will be reciprocated. Borov approaches to take his leave, and Fedora tells him that they will meet again soon in St Petersburg, as she plans to return to Russia the following day. This news deeply saddens Loris, who cannot follow her because he is an exile wanted for murder. Later, while Lazinski plays the piano, Fedora presses Loris for the truth. He admits to having shot Vladimir but insists that he had good reason to do so. He promises to return in two hours with proof of his claims. Just as the dancing is about to begin, De Siriex advises Fedora to end the party: he has received a message announcing an assassination attempt against the Tsar by the nihilists. After the guests have departed, Fedora writes a letter to the Russian authorities. She calls for Grech, who informs her that, earlier that evening, a suspicious man delivered a letter to Loris from his brother, Valeriano. Fedora adds this new detail to her letter and orders Grech to send it immediately to Vladimir's father in St Petersburg. She then instructs him to wait with his men in the garden: at her signal, Loris is to be handed over to the police and arrested. Loris returns and recounts in detail how he discovered that Vladimir was his wife's lover. He reveals that the two had even arranged to meet on the night before Vladimir's wedding to Fedora. As proof, he shows her the love letters Vladimir had written to his wife. Recognising her fiancé's handwriting, Fedora feels all the love she had preserved for his memory turn instantly to hatred. Yet Loris's devotion has deeply moved her. When he prepares to leave, she desperately begs him to stay, willing to compromise herself in order to save him from Grech's ambush outside.

ACT THREE

The garden in front of Fedora's villa in Switzerland.

Fedora and Loris are living together in perfect harmony. Olga, typically capricious and fickle, marvels at how deeply in love they remain. Loris leaves for the post office, hoping to find letters from his brother Valeriano, from whom he has not heard in some time. Meanwhile, De Siriex arrives and asks Olga about her failed romance with the Polish pianist, revealing that the man was probably a spy sent to make her talk. Once alone with Fedora, De Siriex delivers some devastating news: as a direct result of the letter Fedora sent from Paris, Vladimir's father had Valeriano arrested. He died in prison, and Loris's elderly mother subsequently died of grief. Fedora is overwhelmed with despair, realising that she has caused the



deaths of the mother and brother of the man she loves. She struggles to conceal her anguish from Olga, but, as soon as she is left alone, gives free rein to her overwhelming remorse. Loris returns from the post office empty-handed, but a servant soon arrives with the mail and a telegram. The telegram from Dr Borov brings welcome news: Loris has been pardoned by the Tsar. However, an accompanying letter reveals the arrest and deaths of his brother and mother. It adds that these tragedies were caused by a denunciation sent to Vladimir's father by an anonymous Russian woman living in Paris. The letter bears only the writer's first name, but she should not be difficult to identify. To Fedora's horror, Loris vows vengeance against the unknown informant. When Borov's arrival is announced, Fedora, in a state of panic, secretly pours poison into her tea. She desperately tries to prevent Loris from going to meet his friend, while imploring him to forgive the woman who betrayed his family. Her frantic pleas arouse Loris's suspicions, and he begins to piece the truth together. In desperation, Fedora drinks the poisoned tea. Realising too late what has happened, Loris frantically calls for help, but to no avail. Fedora dies in his arms, whispering one last plea for his forgiveness.

GRAN TEATRO
LA FENICE