



**ACCESS OPERA
EDUCATOR GUIDE**

GIUSEPPE VERDI

**UN BALLO
IN MASCHERA**



The Met
ropolitan
Opera

UN BALLO IN MASCHERA

THE WORK

An opera in three acts,
sung in Italian

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Antonio Somma

Based on Eugène Scribe's
libretto for Daniel-François-
Esprit Auber's opera
*Gustave III, ou Le Bal
Masqué*

First performed
February 17, 1859, at the
Teatro Apollo, Rome, Italy

PRODUCTION

David Alden
Production

Paul Steinberg
Set Designer

Brigitte Reiffenstuel
Costume Designer

Adam Silverman
Lighting Designer

Maxine Braham
Choreographer

Production a gift of the Betsy and
Edward Cohen / Areté Foundation
Fund for New Productions and
Revivals and Daisy and Paul Soros

Additional support from The
Gilbert S. Kahn & John J. Noffo Kahn
Foundation and Mr. and Mrs. William
R. Miller

Revival a gift of Rolex

Access Opera: Open Rehearsals
for Students is made possible by
Stephen E. and Evalyn E. Milman.

Additional funding has been
provided by The Joseph and Robert
Cornell Memorial Foundation,
The Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams
Charitable Foundation, and Nike.

This program is also supported by
public funds from the New York City
Department of Cultural Affairs in
partnership with the City Council.

© 2023 The Metropolitan Opera

What do you do when you discover that your wife is in love with your best friend—who just happens to be the king? Love triangles like this have been a staple of opera since the very beginning; throw in a murderous conspiracy and a mysterious fortune teller, and you have the ingredients for *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Based loosely on historical events, the opera tells the story of Gustav III, King of Sweden, his assassination by an aggrieved nobleman called Anckarström, and the professional medium Madame Ulrica Arvidsson, who allegedly predicted the tragic course of events. In Verdi's hands, this tangled tale of love and betrayal, supernatural forces, and political intrigue becomes one of his typically moving and effective pieces of theater.

Un Ballo in Maschera has a tortured composition history. Verdi originally wanted to set Shakespeare's *King Lear*, one of his all-time favorite plays; he settled on *Gustave III*, the source material for *Ballo*, only after his Shakespearean plans had fallen through. The new subject was then the cause of an epic battle with the theatrical censors, which ended with Verdi refusing to stage the opera in Naples, where it had been commissioned, and premiering it in Rome instead. Along the way, the original Swedish setting got swapped, however improbably, for colonial Boston, Massachusetts. And yet, despite its chaotic creation, *Ballo* is a triumph. One of Verdi's most diverse scores, its catchy tunes and expertly judged dramatic shifts keep spectators hooked from the beginning. The opera also has a special place in the history of the Met: In 1955, the famous contralto Marian Anderson became the first Black singer to appear in a leading role on the Met stage, singing the role of Madame Arvidsson. Thanks to Anderson breaking the Met's "color line," a long line of world-leading Black singers have made the company their home ever since.

This guide is intended to help your students understand *Un Ballo in Maschera* as the meeting point of different operatic traditions and as a case study in the unexpected difficulties composers of Italian opera could face when bringing sensitive topics to the stage. They will also help students appreciate the creative choices made by David Alden in his dreamlike production of Verdi's opera, which restores the original Swedish setting while updating the action with a threatening, glamorous evocation of mid-20th-century film noir. The information on the following pages is designed to provide context, deepen background knowledge, and enrich the overall experience of attending a final dress rehearsal at the Metropolitan Opera.



The Metropolitan Opera is a vibrant home for the most creative and talented singers, conductors, composers, musicians, stage directors, designers, visual artists, choreographers, and dancers from around the world. Founded in 1883, the Met first opened in a lavish opera house at Broadway and 39th Street that, while beautiful, had significant practical limitations. Almost from the beginning, it was clear that the stage facilities of the original theater could not meet the Met's technical needs. But it was not until the Met joined with other New York institutions in forming Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts that a new home became possible. The new Metropolitan Opera House, which opened at Lincoln Center in September 1966, was a technical marvel of its day, and has remained an architectural landmark ever since.

Each season, the Met stages more than 200 opera performances in New York, welcoming more than 800,000 attendees. In addition to presenting the indispensable masterpieces of history's great composers, performed by the world's finest singers and directed by visionaries from throughout the theatrical world, the Met is committed to ensuring that opera remains a living art form by commissioning and staging vital new works that tell modern stories and engage with the issues of today. The Met is also a leader in new media distribution initiatives, harnessing state-of-the-art technology to bring performances from the Met's iconic stage to millions of people worldwide.

This guide includes a variety of materials on Giuseppe Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

The Story, The Source, and Who's Who in *Un Ballo in Maschera*

A Timeline: The historical context of the opera's story and composition

A Closer Look: A brief article highlighting an important aspect of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*

Guided Listening: A series of musical excerpts with questions and a roadmap to possible student responses

Ten Essential Musical Terms: Musical terminology that will help students analyze and describe Verdi's work

Student Critique: A performance activity highlighting specific aspects of this production and topics for a wrap-up discussion following students' attendance

Further Resources: Recommendations for additional study, both online and in print

This guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, whether they have any prior acquaintance with opera or the performing arts. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds and will encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts as a whole—as a medium of both entertainment and creative expression. This guide offers in-depth introductions to:

- The opera's story and how it embellishes the historical facts that inspired it
- The composer's integration of elements borrowed from French opera
- Verdi's use of music to create entertaining and memorable characters
- Creative choices made by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera for this production
- The opera as a unified work of art, involving the efforts of composer, librettist, and Met artists

Summary

Secrets abound in the court of King Gustavo III of Sweden. Not only are two embittered noblemen conspiring against Gustavo, but the king has a secret of his own: He is in love with Amelia, the wife of his friend and trusted counselor Count Anckarström. If the political intrigue and the hidden love triangle are brought together, the consequences will be deadly.

One fateful day, Gustavo and his court pay a visit to a fortune teller, Madame Ulrica Arvidsson, who makes a horrifying prediction: Gustavo will be murdered by the next person to shake his hand. When that person turns out to be Anckarström, the king's right-hand man, everyone dismisses the prediction as nonsense. But the wheels of tragedy are in motion. That very night, just after Gustavo and Amelia admit they love each other for the first time, Anckarström discovers the truth. Wounded by his wife and his friend's betrayal, he joins the conspiracy against Gustavo. The next day, in the middle of a grand masked ball at the palace, Anckarström takes his revenge—and none of Amelia's attempts to warn Gustavo can prevent Madame Arvidsson's dark prophecy from coming to pass.

THE SOURCE: EUGÈNE SCRIBE'S LIBRETTO FOR *GUSTAVE III, OU LE BAL MASQUÉ*

Throughout his long career as an opera composer, Verdi sought out new stories and novel theatrical situations. So, when he proposed to fulfill his latest commission from the Teatro San Carlo in Naples by writing an opera based on Eugène Scribe's libretto for Daniel-François-Esprit Auber's *Gustave III, ou Le Bal Masqué*, it must have been with a slight sense of disappointment. Eugène Scribe (1791–1861) was a highly experienced playwright who had provided libretti for countless operas in his native Paris. Indeed, Verdi himself had collaborated with Scribe on his opera *Les Vêpres Siciliennes*, which had been staged at the Paris Opéra in 1855. There was no doubt that *Gustave III* was highly effective on stage. But it was certainly not new; Auber and Scribe's opera premiered in 1833. Nor was it an unknown quantity in Italy: Two other composers, including Verdi's respected older colleague Saverio Mercadante, had already written Italian operas based on Scribe's libretto.

It is worth briefly outlining the real historical events that inspired Scribe. Gustav III of Sweden, who reigned between 1771 and 1792, was a pivotal figure in that country's history and in the wider European intellectual movement known as the Enlightenment. But Gustav's absolute monarchy, which hobbled the power of the Swedish parliament and the aristocracy, made him many enemies. By the early 1790s, a group of noblemen including Adolph Ribbing, Claes Fredrik Horn, and one Jacob Johan Anckarström had formed a conspiracy to assassinate the king. On March 16, 1792, at a masked ball at the Royal Opera House in Stockholm, Anckarström (or possibly Ribbing) shot Gustav once in the lower back. The shot did not kill Gustav immediately, and it initially seemed he would survive. Gustav eventually died two weeks later only after the wound became infected. Anckarström was swiftly captured and tried for regicide; he was executed on April 29.

In and of itself, Gustav's assassination was not the most promising candidate for dramatic treatment, but two curious circumstances around the king's death were highly suggestive. First,



Gustav III of Sweden

at dinner before the ball, Gustav received an anonymous note warning him of the plot against his life and begging him not to attend. Second, some four years before the assassination, the king had consulted a professional medium named Ulrica Arfvidsson, who had told him to beware a masked man bearing a sword—a prediction that was later associated with Anckarström's bloody deed at the ball. Both events found their way into Scribe's libretto for Auber's *Gustave III*, though for dramatic effect the fortune teller's prediction takes place just a day before the murder and is made far more specific. Scribe knew, however, that the story was lacking in other respects. Gustav's assassination was a male-dominated affair, and its motivations were drearily political. Enter Amélie, Gustave's love interest. Despite being a totally invented character, she plays an essential role in the drama. By making Anckarström Gustave's friend and Amélie Anckarström's wife, Scribe creates a love triangle that—though historically inaccurate—expertly clarifies the motivations of the characters and sets up the tragic outcome of the story in a dramatically pleasing way.

Twenty-five years later, Verdi and his librettist, the lawyer and playwright Antonio Somma, easily adapted Scribe's drama to Italian operatic conventions. But they were faced with another problem: censorship. In the wake of various failed revolutions across Europe in 1848, governments had become very touchy about what was represented on stage. Thus, the chances of an opera like *Gustave III*, which showed the assassination of a reigning monarch, escaping the censor unscathed were nil. Indeed, the censor in Naples demanded many changes, including turning the king into a duke, moving the action somewhere other than Sweden, and changing the title to *Una Vendetta in Domino (Masked Vengeance)*; other elements of the plot, such as Gustavo and Amelia's adultery, were also controversial and had to be made more sympathetic. Unfortunately for Verdi and Somma, in January 1858 Italian nationalists attempted to assassinate Napoleon III of France. The censors were unnerved and demanded still further changes that would have completely altered the character of the opera. Verdi refused to comply and broke his contract with the Teatro San Carlo. The theater promptly sued the composer, who then countersued for damages.

With the legal wrangling ongoing, Verdi was able to pitch the opera elsewhere, and eventually he settled on premiering the work in Rome. There, too, the censors imposed their will, albeit lightly. King Gustavo of Sweden became Riccardo, Earl of Warwick and Governor of Boston, Massachusetts, in the late 17th century; the title changed again to *Un Ballo in Maschera (A Masked Ball)*. But the dramatic core of the story that Verdi and Somma had inherited from Scribe's original libretto remained intact. In this way, a tale that had proved its worth on the operatic stage three times already scored another success.

VOICE TYPES

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified into six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO the highest voice type, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO the voice type lying below the soprano and above the contralto; the term comes from the Italian word "mezzo," meaning "middle"

CONTRALTO the lowest female voice type, also called "alto"

TENOR the highest standard voice type in adult males

BARITONE the voice type lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS the lowest voice type

Synopsis

ACT I: *Reception in the royal palace in Stockholm.* It is a normal day in Gustavo's court. Courtiers and officials flock the hall where the king receives petitions. Among them are a group of conspirators who have sworn vengeance against the king, including the nobles Count Ribbing and Count Horn. Gustavo's page Oscar announces the king's entrance. Gustavo is in a carefree mood, but when Oscar hands him the guest list for a grand masked ball to be held the next day, he becomes distracted: On the list is the wife of his trusted counselor Anckarström, Amelia, with whom he is secretly in love. As Gustavo daydreams about seeing her again, Oscar admits the next visitor: Anckarström himself! When Anckarström announces that he knows the cause of the king's troubled expression, Gustavo panics. But Anckarström is actually there to warn Gustavo about a plot against his life. Gustavo is both relieved and scornful: He will not be intimidated by conspiracies. Oscar then admits a judge who has brought various edicts for Gustavo to sign. Among them is an order of banishment for a certain Madame Arvidsson, a fortune teller. Oscar steps up to defend Madame Arvidsson against the judge's accusations, albeit mockingly. Gustavo is tickled by the idea of meeting the soothsayer and commands the party to reconvene later that day at Madame Arvidsson's dwelling, in disguise. Ribbing and Horn spy an opportunity. Amid general merriment only Anckarström is concerned for the king's safety.

Madame Arvidsson's den. The scene opens on one of Madame Arvidsson's séances. Gustavo arrives in disguise midway through her ritual incantation to the King of Hell. The first visitor to have his fortune told is Cristiano, a sailor. Madame Arvidsson predicts that he will be promoted; Gustavo secretly slips money and papers into Cristiano's pocket, making the prediction come true. Madame Arvidsson then clears the room for a private audience with a noblewoman: Amelia! Gustavo remains hidden as Amelia pours out her troubles to the soothsayer. She is unhappily in



Madame Arvidsson and Gustavo
MARTY SOHL / MET OPERA

love with the king. Madame Arvidsson tells Amelia that she must gather a magic herb after dark. If she is brave enough to pluck this herb in the middle of the night, she will be cured. Amelia resolves to go that very night; Gustavo vows to meet her there.

The crowd demands readmission to the séance. Amelia steals away, leaving Gustavo first in line to have his fortune told. Posing as a fisherman, he sings a lilting sea shanty before the assembled crowd, which now includes Oscar and the conspirators Ribbing and Horn. Madame Arvidsson is suspicious; she warns her new client not to toy with the forces of destiny. Suddenly she recoils in horror: Gustavo will soon die at the hands of a friend. The crowd is aghast, but Gustavo makes light of the prediction. Laughing, he asks Madame Arvidsson who will commit the murder. The next person to shake his hand, she answers. Just then, Anckarström enters and clasps Gustavo by the hand. Triumphant, Gustavo tells Madame Arvidsson that her prediction is mistaken, for Anckarström is his closest friend. The crowd rejoices.

ACT II: *An abandoned warehouse.* Amelia has found her way to the place where the fateful herb grows. She is terrified but determined to go ahead with her plan. In the distance bells toll midnight. Suddenly Amelia has a horrible vision of a ghastly specter rising from the earth before her. She prays to God for deliverance. Just then Gustavo appears. He begs Amelia to admit that she loves him, but she rebuffs him in despair: Is she not married to Anckarström, who would gladly give his life for Gustavo? Gradually, however, Amelia's resolve crumbles. Quietly at first, and then with great abandon, she declares that she loves Gustavo back. But their passionate embrace is interrupted by the appearance of none other than Anckarström. Amelia veils herself



hurriedly. Anckarström warns Gustavo that the conspirators have spotted him leaving the city and plan to kill him. He urges the king to swap outfits with him so he can escape unrecognized. Gustavo reluctantly agrees but commands his friend to escort the veiled lady back to the city incognito. Gustavo slips away, but it is too late for Anckarström and Amelia: The conspirators are upon them. Disappointed to find not the king but his right-hand man, they demand to know who Anckarström's mysterious companion is. Anckarström refuses to say, and the situation is about to descend into violence when Amelia herself removes her veil. The conspirators are astonished: Was Anckarström really having a secret romantic rendezvous with his own wife? They leave, mightily amused. Anckarström turns with icy politeness to Amelia. He will accompany her to the city as requested, but he has understood the terrible truth.

ACT III: *Count Anckarström's house.* Anckarström and Amelia are in the middle of a terrible argument. He accuses her of infidelity, and, despite her protestations of innocence, he draws his sword to kill her. Amelia falls at Anckarström's feet and begs him to grant a final wish of seeing her son one last time. Anckarström relents, dismissing her curtly. Left alone, he despairs that Gustavo could have betrayed him. He then admits the conspirators, Ribbing and Horn. To their amazement Anckarström declares his intention to join their plot against Gustavo. He has only one condition: He must be the one to kill the king. Ribbing and Horn are furious, for they both have longstanding grudges against Gustavo. Anckarström suggests they cast lots for the privilege, so the conspirators write their names on slips of paper and place them in a large urn. Just at that moment, Amelia enters the room and Anckarström spies an opportunity for cruelty. He tells Amelia to pick a name out of the urn. Amelia senses that something is wrong and tries to refuse, but Anckarström orders her to obey. Trembling, she picks out a name: Anckarström! He is delighted, while Ribbing and Horn are bitterly disappointed. Amelia understands that she has been made an accessory to murder. Oscar then enters with an invitation to the masked ball.



Having first confirmed that Gustavo will be in attendance, Anckarström accepts. While Oscar chatters cheerfully and Amelia despairs, Anckarström and the conspirators plan their costumes and set a code word to identify themselves at the ball. The code word is “death.”

The king's study. Gustavo has realized that the situation with Amelia is unsustainable. He resolves to send the Anckarströms back to their homeland to take up a new position. Though saddened by the thought of never seeing Amelia again, he signs the edict. Oscar brings an anonymous note from a lady imploring the king not to attend the masked ball, as there is to be an attempt on his life. But Gustavo refuses to risk being accused of cowardice and leaves for the ball.

The ballroom in the royal palace. The masked ball is in full swing. The conspirators arrive but they worry that Gustavo won't show up. Oscar sees Anckarström and identifies him, despite his mask; in response Anckarström rudely demands that Oscar point out Gustavo. Oscar teases Anckarström by refusing to say anything. But Anckarström repeats that it is a matter of great importance, and the page reluctantly identifies Gustavo's costume. Meanwhile, a masked Amelia approaches Gustavo and again begs him to leave before he is attacked. Gustavo guesses Amelia's identity and is overjoyed to see her again. The two lovers bid each other a final farewell, but it is too late: Anckarström has spotted Gustavo—and he plunges a knife into his former friend's breast. The revelers are horrified by this act of treachery. But Gustavo instructs the furious crowd to let Anckarström go. As his strength leaves him, Gustavo declares that even though he loved Amelia, she is innocent of any wrongdoing. In his last act as king, he pardons everyone involved in the conspiracy before drawing his last breath.



WHO'S WHO IN *UN BALLO IN MASCHERA*

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Gustavo III The king of Sweden	goo-STAH-voh	tenor	Big-hearted but reckless, the king is passionately in love with Amelia—consequences be damned.
Amelia Count Anckarström's wife	ah-MEH-lee-ah	soprano	A woman with a dilemma: She loves Gustavo but cannot bear the thought of betraying her husband.
Count Anckarström The king's friend and counselor	ANG-kar-strum	baritone	Anckarström would give his life for his friend—until Gustavo's betrayal sets tragic events in motion.
Oscar The king's page	aw-SKAHR	soprano	Oscar delights in his position by the king's side, but he fails to see the threat to Gustavo's life until it's too late.
Madame Ulrica Arvidsson A fortuneteller	ool-REE-kah AR-vid-sun	mezzo-soprano	An outcast at the margins of society, she predicts the king's death—but her warning is not heeded.
Counts Horn and Ribbing Co-conspirators		basses	Both Horn and Ribbing have been treated poorly by the king. Together they vow revenge.

Due to censorship, Verdi and his librettist had to change the setting for in *Un Ballo in Maschera* from 18th-century Sweden to colonial Boston, Massachusetts, and the names of the characters had to be altered accordingly. Many opera houses today, including the Met, however, restore the original Swedish setting and characters.

The Creation of *Un Ballo in Maschera*

- 1792** On March 16, King Gustav III of Sweden is shot while attending a masked ball at the Royal Opera House in Stockholm. Though not immediately fatal, Gustav's wound becomes infected, and he dies on March 29. His assassin, Jacob Johan Anckarström, is condemned to death and executed on April 29.
- 1813** Giuseppe Verdi is born on October 9 in a small village near Busseto, a market town in the province of Parma. His father and mother are both tradespeople, an innkeeper and a spinner, respectively.
- 1832** The young Verdi, a promising musician despite a patchy musical education, takes the entrance examination for the Milan Conservatory: To everyone's surprise, he is rejected. Undeterred, he decides to study privately in Milan.
- 1833** Daniel-François-Esprit Auber's grand opera *Gustave III, ou Le Bal Masqué* premieres at the Paris Opéra. The libretto is by Eugène Scribe, one of the foremost playwrights of the era, and relates the story of King Gustav's assassination.
- 1839** On November 17, Verdi's first opera, *Oberto*, scores a modest success at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan, Italy's most famous opera house. But success is bittersweet: Verdi's infant son Icilio died just a few weeks before. A few months later, while working on his second opera, a comedy, Verdi's first wife Margherita Barezzi falls ill and dies. The bereft composer is forced to continue working on the comic opera, but it flops miserably.
- 1842** Verdi finally scores a triumphant success with his biblical opera *Nabucco*, which premieres at La Scala on March 9. Among the cast is Giuseppina Strepponi, who will eventually become the composer's second wife. Over the next decade, Verdi works tirelessly, composing at least one opera per year. He will later refer to this period as his *anni di galera*, or "years in prison."
- 1843** The composer Saverio Mercadante, a generation older than Verdi, scores a success with his opera *Il Reggente*. It is one of two Italian operatic adaptations of Scribe's libretto for *Gustave III* to precede Verdi's own take on the material.
- 1853** Two of Verdi's most enduringly popular operas, *Il Trovatore* and *La Traviata*, premiere within two months of one another. By this point, Verdi is widely acknowledged to be the leading Italian composer of his time, and he is courted by opera houses across Italy and Europe.

- 1857** In February, Verdi signs a contract to write a new opera for the Teatro San Carlo in Naples, to be produced in the spring of 1858. The proposed subject is *King Lear*, with a libretto by the lawyer and playwright Antonio Somma. But Verdi is riven with doubts about his ability to do his favorite Shakespearean tragedy justice. Throughout the summer Verdi searches in vain for a suitable replacement. By September, under severe pressure from the management of the San Carlo, he settles for adapting *Gustave III*—even though this will be the fourth opera derived from Scribe’s libretto.
- 1858** The Neapolitan censors have already demanded several changes to the plot and setting of the new opera, which Verdi and his librettist accommodate without difficulty. But in January there is an assassination attempt on Napoleon III of France, and the censor’s office demands even more drastic changes. This time, Verdi refuses to bend and breaks his contract with the San Carlo. The management of the theater sues Verdi, who countersues.
- 1859** With the legal battle in Naples resolved, Verdi is free to pitch the opera to other theaters and enters negotiations with the Rome Opera. The Roman censor, too, demands changes to the work, with the action moved to Boston, Massachusetts, in the late 1600s. Finally, on February 17, *Un Ballo in Maschera* premieres at the Teatro Apollo in Rome. It is a success with the public, even if its highly varied score divides critical opinion.
- 1861** At the culmination of a decades-long project of Italian nationalism known as the Risorgimento, the various independent states on the Italian peninsula are unified into a single Kingdom of Italy. In 1871, the only holdout—the Papal States, ruled by the Pope from the city of Rome—is defeated and incorporated into the new country.
- 1887** *Otello*, Verdi’s first new opera in more than 15 years, premieres on February 15 at La Scala. The premiere is an international event, attended by critics and luminaries from around the world, and the opera is immediately acclaimed as a masterpiece.
- 1893** The elderly Verdi, now 80 years old, astonishes the world once more with another Shakespeare opera, *Falstaff*.
- 1901** Verdi dies in Milan on January 27, following a stroke. He is buried alongside his wife Giuseppina, who died four years earlier. A month later, Verdi and his wife are reburied in the newly completed retirement home for musicians that Verdi himself founded. A colossal crowd of 300,000 people line the streets, and an 800-strong choir sings the chorus “Va, pensiero” from *Nabucco*—the opera with which Verdi’s triumphant career had been launched.
- 1955** A landmark production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* at the Metropolitan Opera features the renowned contralto Marian Anderson as Madame Ulrica Arvidsson: She is the first Black singer to appear on the Met stage in a leading role.

The French Connection

Of all Verdi's operas, *Un Ballo in Maschera* is particularly known for the great diversity of its score, a unique stylistic signature that is often attributed to a French influence. But what was the appeal of French opera for a figure like Verdi, widely held to be the most influential Italian composer of his generation, and indeed of his time?

France had always held an attraction for Italian composers. But whereas in Italy important opera houses could be found in cities across the peninsula, in highly centralized France there was only one operatic center that mattered: Paris. All of Verdi's important forebears spent time in the French capital and wrote for at least one of the city's various opera houses, each of which specialized in different subgenres of opera. Vincenzo Bellini's *I Puritani* (1835) was written for the Théâtre-Italien, which primarily produced Italian opera, for instance, whereas Gaetano Donizetti's *La Fille du Régiment* (1840) was written for the Opéra-Comique, which specialized in the genre of opéra comique.

The biggest prize of all, however, was to have a work performed at the Paris Opéra. This grandest of stages was dedicated to the most spectacular genre of opera, grand opéra, which in its most expansive form entailed large-scale works in five acts, with an integrated ballet performance. For an Italian composer, used to working in the pressurized and sometimes scrappy conditions of the Italian opera industry, the Opéra was luxurious. Direct government support meant that the theater could command significant resources and pay well. Rehearsal time for new works, often inadequate or simply absent in Italian houses, was mandated.

When Verdi was commissioned to write the opera that would become *Un Ballo in Maschera* in 1857, he had already scaled the summit of French opera twice. His first opera performed at the Opéra, *Jérusalem* (1847), was an adaptation and expansion of his popular hit *I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata* (*The Lombards on the First Crusade*), first performed in Milan in 1843. In 1855, meanwhile, he wrote his first original work for the Opéra, *Les Vêpres Siciliennes* (*The Sicilian Vespers*), in collaboration with the most important librettist on the French operatic scene, playwright Eugène Scribe.

As he worked on *Un Ballo in Maschera*, then, Verdi would have had French opera still fresh in his mind—not least because his source material was the libretto for a French grand opéra by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber, *Gustave III, ou Le Bal Masqué*. Even though Verdi and his librettist Antonio Somma compressed the drama into a typically Italian three-act structure, the great variety of situations and character types found in *Un Ballo in Maschera* reflect its origins on the expansive Parisian stage. Quite unlike Verdi's preceding Italian operas, usually built in quite large blocks of music, the action in *Ballo* encompasses lots of concise musical numbers folded seamlessly into the drama.

Also typically French is the character of Oscar, the king's page. Oscar is what is known in English as a "trouser role," meaning a part written for a woman singer dressed as a man (or to use the French term, *en travesti*). Italian opera had a native tradition of trouser roles, but these parts tended to be heroic characters played by a mezzo-soprano—the eponymous hero of Gioachino Rossini's *Tancredi* (1813) is a good example. Oscar, though, is played by a light, agile

soprano who can handle complex coloratura singing in a high register. This character type was much more popular in France, and it's in Oscar's music that the French influence on Verdi is most overt. Whenever Oscar is in the spotlight, the score is full of jaunty melodies and bouncy accompaniment that recall the comic operas of Jacques Offenbach. In fact, Oscar's two stand-alone arias are both in a typical French musical form, the couplet, meaning a song in two verses with an identical refrain. The refrain in his Act III aria "*Saper vorreste*" even features the nonsense syllables "tra la la," perfectly capturing Oscar's youthful energy and fundamental unseriousness.

The opposite of Oscar's frivolity is found in the roles of Amelia and Anckarström, both of whom sing in a musical language more typical of serious Italian opera: Neither would be caught dead singing "tra la la." In this way, Verdi turns stylistic diversity into a dramatic tool. At the beginning of the opera only one character—Gustavo—can flit easily between these two musical languages, French farce versus Italian melodrama. As part of the character growth that finally allows him to let go of Amelia in Act III, however, Gustavo sets aside his French stylings and takes on the stature of a tragic hero.

The Guided Listening Activities are designed to introduce students to a selection of memorable moments from the opera. They include information on what is happening dramatically, a description of the musical style, and a roadmap of musical features to listen for. Guided Listening Activities can be used by students and teachers of varying levels of musical experience.

IN PREPARATION

Teachers can access recordings for these Guided Listening Activities at metopera.org/aoballomusic.

“Volta la terrea”

The chief judge wants Gustavo to sign an order banishing the fortune teller Madame Arvidsson, who stands accused of consorting with evil forces. Oscar steps up to defend her, though with tongue firmly in cheek. It is in the music for Oscar that the French influence on *Un Ballo in Maschera* is at its clearest, and this brief aria from Act I is an excellent example of the light, brilliant style the character brings to all his scenes.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- How the two verses of Oscar’s aria are capped with an identical refrain (couplet form)
- How the refrain is distinguished from the verses musically
- The agile coloratura singing required for Oscar’s melody, including quick staccato (detached) delivery and very high tessitura (vocal range)

- (00:00) Oscar begins with a wide, leaping melody, repeated twice over a simple strumming pattern in the strings. Then a downward-sliding melody with small chromatic steps evokes the swooning ladies who ask Madame Arvidsson to predict the outcome of their love affairs.
- (00:29) After a pregnant pause, the passage from the verse to the refrain is marked by an increase in speed (tempo) and a change in the accompaniment pattern, switching into a fast off-beat vamp. Oscar delivers the moral of his tale—Madame Arvidsson must be in league with the Devil—with a devilishly difficult melody that climaxes with multiple repetitions of the word “sì” (“yes”) at top of the singer’s range.
- (00:54) The second verse is set to the same music as the first, though with different words; Oscar describes the gentlemen who ask Arvidsson to predict the outcome of their adventures at sea or at war. But the second refrain is identical to the first in every respect, and its final note blends seamlessly into the action that follows.

“Re dell’abisso”

A showpiece for a skilled contralto, the lowest female voice type, this aria appears at the beginning of the only scene featuring Madame Arvidsson. Verdi calls on all his musical resources to portray the spooky atmosphere of Arvidsson’s dwelling and her ritual incantation to the King of Hell. Whether this is genuine magic or clever trickery is for the spectator to decide.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- How instrumental timbre (sound quality) is used to evoke the horror of Madame Arvidsson’s séance
- The integration of asides from Gustavo and the chorus around the main sections of the soloist’s aria
- How Verdi exploits the low range of the contralto voice at dramatic moments

- (00:00) The scene begins with three dissonant hammer blows in the full orchestra. Then Verdi juxtaposes contrasting musical sounds to create a dark, tense atmosphere—cavernous bass notes set against eerie calls from the clarinet and a writhing figure in the strings. Gradually the texture builds to a loud climax.
- (01:32) The eerie clarinet call marks the beginning of the séance. The crowd (played by the chorus) whisper among themselves: Madame Arvidsson is about to summon the Devil!
- (01:57) Madame Arvidsson begins her incantation, imploring the King of Hell to show himself. Beginning low in her voice, her first long phrase is in the shape of an arch, reaching a high peak before returning to the starting point.
- (02:26) The next section of the aria is structured in threes, mirroring the words of Madame Arvidsson’s spell: Three times (“*tre volte*”) the hoopoe has cried, three times the salamander has hissed, three times a voice from beyond the grave has spoken to her. Each invocation is a variation of the same melody, sung progressively higher and higher. A climactic high note brings the first part of the aria to a close.
- (00:00) Gustavo enters to a jaunty melody: “I’ve arrived first!” he exclaims, making clear he thinks the whole situation is a joke. The chorus tells him to be quiet. A swelling orchestra builds up to the next section of the aria.
- (00:30) Madame Arvidsson resumes her incantation to a triumphant melody, converting the dark minor key she previously used to a bright major key: The Devil is here! This opening phrase is followed by an echo of the “three times” melody.
- (01:09) The concluding section of the aria begins. A long, sinuous melody creeps up twice through the singer’s entire range, bottom to top: Nothing shall remain hidden from her gaze. Finally, after Arvidsson calls imperiously for silence (“*Silenzio!*”), the orchestra wraps up quickly.

“È scherzo od è follia”

Madame Arvidsson has delivered her fateful prophecy: Gustavo’s death is rapidly approaching, and to make matters worse, he will die at the hand of a friend. Gustavo dismisses the soothsayer’s words as nonsense, kicking off a classic device in Italian opera—the concertato, an ensemble number where the contrasting reactions of everyone on stage are woven together simultaneously.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- How Verdi juxtaposes the main melody of the ensemble, portraying Gustavo’s laughter, with the contrasting reactions of other characters on stage
- How characters with different vocal ranges are given melodies that allow them to stand out of the ensemble at different moments

- (00:00) Gustavo begins the ensemble with a jaunty major-key tune: The prophecy is either a joke, or it’s madness! The leaps, skipping rhythm, and staccato (detached) delivery suggest a man doubled over with laughter.
- (00:24) Madame Arvidsson enters next in a minor key, addressing herself to Ribbing and Horn: She has noticed they aren’t laughing like Gustavo. Ribbing and Horn scramble to cover their tracks: Have they been rumbled? Their melody consists of rapid bursts of staccato notes.
- (00:48) Oscar enters next: Can Gustavo’s fate really lie in a bloody death? His melody soars over the ensemble in long notes while the other characters continue with their thoughts; Ribbing and Horn’s blustering tune is doubled by low strings. Gradually the texture thickens with the addition of the chorus.
- (01:32) Following a dramatic fermata (prolonged pause), filled in by a high note for Oscar alone, Gustavo reprises his original melody; this time the accompaniment is a steady off-beat vamp. The other characters interject around Gustavo’s phrases.
- (01:54) A concluding section begins for the full ensemble, building slowly in volume and intensity. The end of the aria is preceded by a cadenza—an unaccompanied passage for all five solo characters, singing together in harmony.

“Ecco l’orrido campo ... Ma dell’arido stelo divulso”

Following Madame Arvidsson’s instructions, Amelia has made her way to an abandoned warehouse to pluck the herb in the middle of the night, hoping in this way to cure her passion for Gustavo. Her aria flows on seamlessly from the orchestral prelude, which depicts both the terror of the dreadful surroundings and Amelia’s anguished state of mind, torn between her love for Gustavo and her guilt in betraying Anckarström. As Amelia is entirely alone on stage this aria is like a soliloquy in spoken theater. It takes both vocal skill and acting ability to pull off its dramatic shifts in mood.

WHAT TO LISTEN FOR:

- How the singer uses distinct vocal qualities in the various sections of the aria
- How Verdi juxtaposes a solo instrument with the soprano’s vocal line in the main part of Amelia’s aria to create a feeling of sadness
- How Verdi uses the resources of the orchestra to portray Amelia’s hallucination

- (00:00) Amelia begins with a passage of recitative accompanied by full orchestra: Her fear at reaching the deserted field is evoked by rumbling figures in the orchestra.
- (01:02) At the thought of her own death, Amelia’s fear gives way slowly to resignation. An oboe plays a sad melody in a minor key, introducing the main section of her aria.
- (02:02) The aria proper begins in a lilting rhythm, like a broken waltz. In the first verse, Amelia’s dark thoughts are accompanied simply by strings, with a countermelody on the oboe. She hopes the herb will extinguish the image of Gustavo in her soul.
- (03:12) A brief connecting passage brings Amelia to the second verse of her aria. This time the melody is carried by the oboe, while Amelia declaims her text in speech-like rhythms around it. She is trying to work up the courage to go through with her plan.
- (04:29) Amelia’s final notes resolve on an uncomfortable sustained chord. Bells can be heard striking midnight. Suddenly Amelia is struck by a horrifying image of a specter rising from the earth, rendered by the orchestra playing at maximum volume and doom-laden fanfares in the brass section.
- (05:27) The oboe moves the music into a major key for the final section: Amelia falls to her knees to pray. “Have mercy” (“*Miserere*”), she cries to God, her melody rising to its very highest point for a grand climax. Following a brief cadenza—an unaccompanied vocal flourish—the aria ends.

Aria

A song for solo voice accompanied by orchestra, traditionally used to express a character's emotions or to reflect on a situation that has arisen in the plot. Nineteenth-century Italian arias often feature a two-part form that showcases an intensification of emotion from a lyrical first section (the cantabile) to a faster second section (the cabaletta). As Verdi's career progressed, however, the cabaletta fell out of fashion, and by the time of *Un Ballo in Maschera* he increasingly tried to disguise this two-part form (or avoid it altogether). Amelia's Act II aria contains remnants of the division, in that two lyrical verses are followed by a more intense episode featuring a horrifying vision and a prayer.

Baritone

Literally "deep sounding," a baritone is a male singer with a vocal range between that of the low bass voice and the high tenor voice. Uncommon until the 19th century, baritone roles have grown in popularity in opera since the works of Verdi, who was extremely fond of this voice type and frequently employed it to depict morally ambiguous characters (or outright villains), authority figures (especially fathers), and sometimes both at once. The character of Anckarström fits this description well: His journey from devoted friend to sworn enemy of Gustavo is what drives the opera's plot.

Cadenza

A passage near the end of an opera aria where the soloist sings a virtuosic flourish without accompaniment, briefly delaying the final notes of the song. In the 18th and early 19th centuries, Italian opera singers were expected to improvise these passages on the spot, but by the mid-1800s they were usually written out in full in the score. Cadenzas are featured in many of the solo arias in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, but memorably also at the end of the ensemble that follows Madame Arvidsson's dark prediction: Here all five soloists on stage sing a cadenza simultaneously in harmony.

Coloratura

Vocal writing for a solo singer that features crisp repeated notes, intricate melodic figures, rapid scales, and trills. Requiring vocal agility and a wide range, coloratura singing tests any singer's technical skill and interpretive ability. In the first half of the 19th century, Italian opera made extensive use of coloratura, but as the years passed it increasingly became more of an artistic effect. In *Un Ballo in Maschera*, only the role of Oscar requires a coloratura soprano—a specialist in this kind of vocal writing—with the coloratura in his vocal line a reflection of his frivolous character.

Contralto

The lowest female voice type, whose most comfortable and powerful register sits below that of a mezzo-soprano. Because genuine contralto voices are also very rare, however, these roles are often played by mezzo-sopranos who can reliably hit the low notes. Generally, in 19th-century Italian opera, the contralto plays the role of an older woman, often socially marginalized or outcast in some way. The fortune teller Madame Arvidsson, an older woman who deals in the supernatural, fits this mold exactly.

Concertato

A common device in Italian opera of the 19th century, the concertato is an ensemble piece in which multiple characters sing simultaneously. Though one of the least realistic conventions of Italian opera, the concertato ensemble is a powerful musical device at the composer's disposal. It is often used to dramatize several contrasting reactions to a shocking plot twist, such as Madame Arvidsson's prediction of Gustavo's death in *Un Ballo in Maschera*.

En travesti

Derived from the French for "disguised," the term refers to roles which require woman singers to play men characters. In English these parts are also called "trouser roles." They came into fashion in the late 18th century, around the time that the castrato—a male singer who had been surgically castrated in adolescence to prevent his voice breaking, and who sang in a soprano register as a result—was falling out of favor. In French opera, however, travesti roles continued to be written for light, high sopranos, and this influenced Verdi's music for the character of Oscar.

Grand opéra

Though in English "grand opera" is often used to describe all 19th-century opera, in French grand opéra refers to a specific subgenre of opera that was produced only at the Paris Opéra, at its most popular between circa 1830 and 1850. A typical grand opéra comprised no fewer than five acts and usually also included a ballet; it was sung throughout, unlike the genre of opéra comique which alternated between singing and spoken dialogue. Verdi's experience of working with the French language and with the conventions of grand opéra influenced his composition of *Un Ballo in Maschera* just a few years later.

Libretto

Meaning "little book" in Italian, the libretto is the text of an opera, including all the words that are said or sung by performers. Throughout most of operatic history libretti were written in poetic verse. Until the early 18th century, composers frequently set music to a preexisting libretto. During the 18th and 19th centuries, collaboration between the author of the libretto, known as the librettist, and the composer became more frequent. As Verdi's fame increased, he became very demanding with his librettists, often hounding them until they provided exactly what he wanted. In the case of *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Verdi's librettist Antonio Somma—a playwright and lawyer—had never written a libretto before; Verdi had to teach him the conventions of Italian operatic verse as they went along.

Recitative

A type of vocal writing that imitates the accents and inflections of natural speech. Composers often employ recitative for passages of text that involve quick dialogue and the advancement of plot, since the style allows singers to communicate large amounts of information efficiently. In the 18th century, recitative was either accompanied by a single instrument (such as a keyboard or harpsichord), a small ensemble, or, more rarely, the whole orchestra. As the 19th century progressed, however, orchestral accompaniment became the default; all the recitative passages in *Un Ballo in Maschera* are accompanied by the orchestra.

COMMON CORE
STANDARDS AND
*UN BALLO IN
MASCHERA*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-
12.1

Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-
12.1d

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

Encouraging Student Response in Attending the Final Dress Rehearsal

Watching and listening to a performance is a unique experience that takes students beyond the printed page to an immersion in images, sound, interpretation, technology, drama, skill, and craft. This performance activity will help students analyze different aspects of the experience, engage critically with the performance, and express their views in a respectful and supported environment.

The enclosed performance activity is called “Opera Review: *Un Ballo in Maschera*.” The reproducible handout for this activity, available at the back of this guide, will invite students to think of themselves as opera critics, taking notes on what they see and hear during the performance and critiquing each scene on a five-star scale. Students should bring this activity sheet to the final dress rehearsal and fill it out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. When they return to class, students can use their “Opera Review” sheets as they review and discuss their experience.

DISCUSSION

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the final dress rehearsal. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently?

Un Ballo in Maschera is a unique work in Verdi's oeuvre in that it flits constantly between different moods and registers (even if it ultimately ends with murder). But is the opera a comedy, tragedy, or both? Imagine what might happen to the characters after the final curtain has come down.

The love triangle is an extremely common narrative device, and students may find it interesting to think of other examples they have encountered in novels, music, theater, film, and television. In *Un Ballo in Maschera* the love triangle is especially powerful because it forces us to confront a major societal taboo, namely adultery. In fact, some of the other adaptations of *Gustave III* before Verdi's, such as Mercadante's opera *Il Reggente*, deliberately made the Amelia and Gustavo characters star-crossed lovers who have been unhappily separated by Amelia's marriage. Verdi, however, confronts the uncomfortable issue head-on, refusing to soften the moral dilemma faced by Gustavo, Amelia, and Anckarström.

- Verdi's opera ends with Gustavo admitting that he loved Amelia but declaring that she is innocent of any wrongdoing. Do you agree? Given her characterization in the opera, do you think Amelia agrees?
- Is Gustavo a sympathetic character overall? Why or why not?

Madame Arvidsson appears only in one scene, but she plays a pivotal role in the opera. An open question is whether her abilities to predict the future are genuinely the result of supernatural forces, or whether she is a clever trickster who manipulates her clients' psychology.

- Encourage students to evaluate the performance with this question in mind: How does David Alden's production stage the séance? Do you think the singer playing Madame Arvidsson interpreted the role strongly one way or the other?

In the Boston setting that Verdi and Somma finally settled on during *Un Ballo in Maschera's* complex journey to the stage, Madame Arvidsson became Ulrica, and as part of this transformation she was made Black. In fact, in the original libretto the judge calls for her to be banished in explicitly racist terms, on the grounds that she is "of unclean blood." In the restored Swedish setting, Madame Arvidsson is identified by the judge as a "Gypsy," though his prejudice remains clearly racist in character.

- Why do you think Verdi and Somma changed Ulrica's race in the Boston setting? Does this make you think differently about the composer?
- How should we approach theatrical works from the past when they express attitudes no longer acceptable today?

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Like all works of theater, operas like *Un Ballo in Maschera* continue to provoke debate long after they were written, and students should feel empowered to engage with Verdi's tragicomic masterpiece at all levels.

IN PRINT

Abbate, Carolyn and Roger Parker. *A History of Opera*. New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2015.

Two of the world's most famous opera scholars come together in this accessible single-volume history of opera from its invention to the present day, written for a nonspecialist audience.

Budden, Julian. *Verdi. The Master Musicians Series*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1985.

A scholarly biography of Verdi that considers the man, the myth, and the music in an accessible and engaging way.

John, Nicholas, ed. *Un Ballo in Maschera*. English National Opera Guides. Richmond, Surrey: Overture Publishing, 2011.

An accessible guide containing the full text and parallel translation, a table of musical themes, and in-depth essays by Verdi scholars on important aspects of the opera.

ONLINE

Royal Opera House, "Rehearsing *Un Ballo in Maschera* with the Ladies Chorus"

[youtube.com/watch?v=QFGUjsg7Lxg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFGUjsg7Lxg)

The director of the Royal Opera House's 2014 production of *Un Ballo in Maschera* takes us through her vision for the scene of Madame Arvidsson's séance.

Marian Anderson, "Re dell'abisso, affrettati"

[youtube.com/watch?v=uVAjrOt_I4c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVAjrOt_I4c)

A live recording of Marian Anderson singing Madame Arvidsson in the Met's landmark 1955 production.



Un Ballo in Maschera

Performance date:

Reviewed by:

Have you ever wanted to be a music and theater critic? Now's your chance!

As you watch *Un Ballo in Maschera*, use the space below to keep track of your thoughts and opinions. What did you like about the performance? What didn't you like? If you were in charge, what might you have done differently? Think carefully about the action, music, and stage design. Then, after the opera, share your opinions with your friends, classmates, and anyone else who wants to learn more about Verdi's masterpiece and this performance at the Met!

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Officials gather at Gustavo's court to submit their petitions. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Gustavo examines the guest list for a masked ball, while a group of conspirators swear vengeance against him. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Anckarström warns Gustavo about a plot against his life. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Gustavo and Oscar resolve to meet the fortune teller Madame Ulrica Arvidsson at her dwelling. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Madame Arvidsson conducts a séance. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Madame Arvidsson has a private meeting with Amelia. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
The crowd reassembles at Madame Arvidsson's den, and Gustavo is first in line to have his fortune told. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Anckarström arrives at Madame Arvidsson's den. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Alone in a field, Amelia has a horrible vision. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
The conspirators descend upon Anckarström and Amelia, who is forced to reveal her identity. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
The conspirators decide who will kill Gustavo. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Oscar appears with an invitation to Gustavo's masquerade. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Gustavo decides to send Anckarström and Amelia back to their homeland. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Gustavo receives an anonymous note. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
The conspirators gather at the masked ball. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆

THE PERFORMANCE, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN / STAGING
Gustavo and Amelia find each other and bid each other a final farewell. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Anckarström spots Gustavo and plunges a knife into his breast. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆
Gustavo dies. MY OPINION OF THIS SCENE:	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆	☆☆☆☆☆