

# Director's Notes

by **Manuel Renga**

Director



The production of *Rigoletto. The Mysteries of the Theatre* started with a question: how to adapt *Rigoletto* to an audience of children while remaining faithful to Verdi's original plot, which introduces themes such as murder, revenge, and violence against women? Our objective was, therefore, to find kid-friendly approaches through the magical and mysterious techniques of theatre. Hence, we decided that the protagonists would be a troupe of actors performing the opera, rather than just Rigoletto, Gilda, or the Duke so that our actors could use and display the captivating machinery and techniques that are hidden behind the scenes to surprise children and to convey the original turbulent plot of the opera.

*Rigoletto. The Mysteries of the Theatre* is a two-layered visual performance: the first is evident by the troupe of actors and singers of the "Duke's Theatrical Company" who demonstrate the makings of an opera, and the second is their performance of *Rigoletto*. The artistic decision to create this extra layer to Giuseppe Verdi's acclaimed opera was to expose our young audience to the developments that occurred before and during the show (cast members dressing-up, doing physical warm-ups, and practising theatre techniques and stage illusions), but more importantly, to reveal the theatrical magic that transforms the fictitious into reality. To expose this transformational magic, we exploited scenographic components: front curtain, stage, ground row, backdrops, lights and shadows, wind and thunder effect machine, props, as well as using a puppet-double for the more intimate and tragic scenes, such as in the death of Gilda.

## TOPICS

**Art as a mission in life.** Fyodor Dostoevsky famously wrote "beauty will save the world". We believe that there is a need for art, hence our purpose is to save beauty in order to save the world.

**The astonishing wonders of theatre.** Discovering theatrical techniques and identifying the professions that transform a creative idea into an opera production.

**The magic of theatre.** Its secrets, and the magical transformation from fiction to reality.

**The disguise.** The activity of an actor or opera singer in enacting the life of others.

**The role of an actor.** Every day, an actor must be able to perform the magical wonders of theatre without too much effort since it often becomes difficult to distinguish fiction from reality.

**Build your own personal identity.** Creating uniqueness and authenticity.

**Father-daughter relationship.** Unconditional and mutual love. Sacrificing everything for love.

**Lack of respect for diversity.** Diversity is ridiculed, even exploited. What is considered different anyways?

**Women's rights.** Contrasting female roles are portrayed: Gilda, represents innocence and love; Maddalena, defiance; and Contessa di Ceprano cunning.

## Film References

- *The Dresser* by Peter Yates (1983)
- *Shakespeare in love* by John Madden (1998)
- *Bicycling with Molière* by Philippe Le Guay (2013)
- *Me and Orson Wells* by Richard Linklater (2009)

## Literary References

- *I giganti della montagna* by Luigi Pirandello
- *Noises Off* by Michael Frayn

