

Rigoletto from the pit:

Up close and personal with Maestro Paolo Olmi

27 Sep 2019 (Fri) 7.30pm-8.30pm

CRT-4.34, Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus, HKU

Giuseppe Verdi kept *Rigoletto's* most famous aria — *La donna è mobile* — under wraps until the dress rehearsal for the 1851 Venetian premiere. The secrecy was well-warranted: legend has it that the gondoliers were singing the song by the end of that first night's performance.

Music that was too popular was not Verdi's only problem. The Austrian censors looked askance at the story of a poor girl conned and seduced by a powerful ruler, a story whose outlines remain profoundly resonant today. Not content with mere social commentary, however, Verdi gives us Rigoletto, the jester who has mocked his share of Duke's victims, yet who suddenly sees the other side of the issue when it's his daughter Gilda who's the casualty.

And yet, in the midst of all this human ugliness and moral uncertainty — the pure die, the evil prosper, the sins of the father are paid by the daughter — Verdi also gives us incomparable and unforgettable music. *Rigoletto* remains as morally unsettling and musically uplifting as on that triumphant opening night more than 160 years ago.

Join Maestro Paolo Olmi for a discussion on the opera, its music, the challenges it presents for musicians and artists, and the emotional pull the work always evinces.



Paolo Olmi is a highly respected conductor in the international arena and has been a familiar figure in major concert halls throughout the world including Europe, North and South America, Australia and Asia. He has collaborated with established orchestras including Orchestre National de France, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Symphony Orchestra in London, Santa Cecilia Rome and Orchestra of RAI Rome where he conducted the complete symphonies of Mendelssohn. In 2000, he conducted *Aida* with great praises in Shanghai, a joint collaboration with Teatro Comunale di Firenze. He was awarded the French music critics prize for the Best Opera of the Year for the outstanding production of *William Tell* at the Theatre de champs Elysees. His recent engagement included *Pagliacci* at Teatro dell'Opera di Roma directed by Zeffirelli.



Moderated by **Peter Gordon**, editor of the Asian Review of Books. Active in local opera, he writes and speak regularly on opera, and translated surtitles for Opera Hong Kong's "Rigoletto". He was awarded a "Cavaliere della Stella d'Italia" in 2019.

Please register at: <https://tinyurl.com/y4ypjjkd>

There will be a 20% discount upon ticket purchase for the audience who attend the talk