

2026/27 SEASON LIVE AT THE ROYAL THEATRE

VERDI

IL TROVATORE

OCTOBER 16-24, 2026

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Welcome to the Opera

I have always been drawn to Verdi's music and stories for a variety of reasons, a key one being the depth and beauty of the women in his work, and *Il trovatore* is no exception. Their strength, loyalty, commitment, and overall character development are complex and written deep in the threads of the musical composition, bringing such lush, complicated women to his pieces. Whether it is the love-born loyalty of Leonora, or the revenge-driven madness of Azucena, Verdi's women of *Il trovatore* are lynch pins of the piece. They are the characters that go through the biggest change and struggle throughout the piece.

Il trovatore's historical references and theatrical connections are such a rich and vital component of this piece. The fact that some of the characters referenced in the play and opera are based on historical characters has always fascinated me. Combined with the fact that, while traditionally we would expect Princes and Princesses to feature as leads in an opera, the royal leaders of *Il trovatore* are left to the side, only ever referenced, and it is the lives of the soldiers and ladies-in-waiting that fuel the dramatic narrative, leading to such a different view of the social turmoil. Historically the death of King Martin of Aragon set off an incredibly turbulent time in Spain, as the successor to the throne was contested. While different, the effect of social instability is something that even in our modern day we can deeply understand.

BRENNA CORNER,
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Welcome to *Il trovatore*, one of Giuseppe Verdi's most beloved and iconic operas. It is a great pleasure to share this extraordinary work with you.

What was foremost in my mind while preparing *Il trovatore* was to stay true to Verdi's intentions while finding the balance between the forward-driving energy of his Italianate style and the freedom singers need to express the emotional lives of their characters. For me, the most exciting moments are those where the music, text, and character come together naturally—where the virtuosity serves the drama and every phrase has something human to say.

The story may seem complex at times, with much happening offstage or between acts, but Verdi's music is wonderfully direct. Rooted in the bel canto tradition, it gives us soaring melodies, expressive vocal writing, and moments of dazzling virtuosity, while also revealing Verdi's growing mastery of dramatic storytelling. This is my first time conducting *Il trovatore*, and I feel both excited and humbled by the opportunity.

Whether this is your first *Il trovatore* or a work you know and love, I hope tonight's performance moves you, excites you, and perhaps inspires you to discover even more of Verdi's extraordinary operas.

Thank you for joining us, and enjoy the performance!

GIUSEPPE PIETRAROIA, PRINCIPAL CONDUCTOR

Preparing for this opera has been exciting—despite its popularity, Victoria audiences have not been exposed to it for two decades! So, for the Victoria Symphony, even though many of the arias were familiar by ear, the notes were unfamiliar to the hands. Learning a “new” Verdi opera is always a challenge, due to his intricate and demanding writing. The explosiveness of the score contrasted against the extreme lyricism of the arias demands the ability of an orchestra that can turn on a dime; to go quickly from the quietest dynamic to an intensely emotional outburst, or to accelerate at a breakneck pace only to suddenly grind to a stop. *Il trovatore* also has a constant, unsettling propulsiveness to it, with momentum that seems to keep building; this is a difficult effect to pull off and requires intense concentration from the orchestra for over two hours. It's all worth it, as this is in many respects one of Verdi's finest and most dramatic operas.

TERENCE TAM, CONCERTMASTER



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Il trovatore
content online.

Il trovatore

Music by Giuseppe Verdi
Libretto by Salvatore Cammarano & Leone Emanuele Badare
Based on the play *El trovador* by Antonio García Gutiérrez
First Performance on January 19, 1853, at Teatro Apollo, Rome

Dates October 16 & 22 at 7:30 pm, October 18 at 2:30 pm, October 24 at 4:00 pm
The Royal Theatre
Sung in in Italian with English surtitles

This performance is approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes (including one 20-minute intermission)

CAST

Manrico..... Marcelo Puente
Leonora..... Kirsten LeBlanc
Conte di Luna..... Grant Youngblood
Azucena Simona Genga
Ferrando..... Adam Lau
Ruiz..... Timothy Carter
Inez..... Allison Ward
Messenger Graeme Linton
Old Man Brian Andiel

ENSEMBLES

Pacific Opera Chorus & Supernumeraries
Victoria Symphony

CREATIVE TEAM

Conductor Giuseppe Pietraroia
Stage Director.....Brenna Corner
Set Designer Olivier Landreville
Costume Designer Martin Pakledinaz
Lighting Designer.....Sophie Tang
Projection Designer.....S. Katy Tucker
Fight Director.....Jacques Lemay
Chorus Director & Principal Coach....Kimberley-Ann Bartczak
Stage Manager Marijka Asbeek Brusse
Assistant Stage Manager Giselle Clarke-Trenaman
Assistant Stage Manager Katie Schmidt
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Costume Construction by the Los Angeles Opera Costume Shop

Cast and programme are subject to change

House Programme Design Trapeze Communications | **Synopsis** Brenna Corner
Production & Editor Rhonda Ganz

Synopsis

IN BRIEF: Manrico, a rebel troubadour, loves Leonora, and is hunted by the Count di Luna, who loves her too. Azucena, Manrico's mother, seeks revenge on the Count's family for her own mother's execution. These conflicts converge when the Count captures Azucena and Manrico, Leonora sacrifices herself to save Manrico, and Azucena reveals too late that Manrico was the Count's lost brother.

Background: King Martin I of Aragon dies in 1410; Fernando de Antequera is chosen king in 1412; several nobles rebel under Count Urgel, whose forces are led by Manrico, while Count di Luna commands the royal army.

Note: *Il trovatore* follows three intertwined plot threads: war, love, and revenge. This synopsis views the same events through each of these plot threads. Intermission takes place at the end of Act II.

WAR

In Act I, Manrico has risked his life to come to the royal palace with amorous intent. Intercepted by the Count di Luna, he reveals his identity as the rebel commander, and the two fight.

In Act II, Manrico tells his mother Azucena that he prevailed in their duel for Leonora and almost killed the Count when a mysterious force stopped him. Later the two met again on the battlefield. Manrico stood his ground but was cut down by the Count and left for dead. Azucena found him and nursed him back to health. They have returned to their camp to regroup. Azucena berates Manrico for not having killed the Count when he had a chance, and he swears next time he will. The rebel soldier Ruiz arrives and delivers the first of two messages: the strategic castle at Castellor has been seized, and Manrico has been ordered to take command of its defence. Ignoring Azucena's pleas to remain and warnings that his wounds are still not healed, Manrico hurries off.

In Act III, di Luna's soldiers await the order to attack Castellor. Azucena, captured while searching for her son, is brought before the Count. Recognizing her as Manrico's mother, the Count prepares to punish her. In the castle, Manrico hears of her capture and leaves to save her.

In Act IV, Manrico and Azucena are imprisoned in a tower. Manrico comforts her until the Count orders him away to be killed and forces Azucena to watch.



LOVE

The Count di Luna is enamored of Leonora, a lady-in-waiting to the Princess. He spends nights beneath her balcony fearing the troubadour who has been heard serenading her.

In Act I, Leonora confides in her fellow lady-in-waiting Inez that she awaits the return of the troubadour she loves. She describes their first meeting at a tournament. Then civil war broke out, and he disappeared. One night, she hears him again outside her balcony. To Inez's forebodings and counsels to forget him, Leonora replies that she is destined for him.

The Count di Luna approaches her balcony; he stops as he hears the troubadour's song. Leonora comes running out and, in the darkness, she confuses the Count for the troubadour. Recognizing her mistake, Leonora throws herself at the troubadour's feet, swearing her love and loyalty. The Count furiously challenges the troubadour to reveal his identity: he is Manrico, a follower of Urgel and a traitor. The two men fight.

In Act II, Manrico's mother Azucena has been nursing her son back to health from wounds sustained in battle. Manrico tells her the story of his duel with the Count, and how he had spared the Count's life. The rebel soldier Ruiz delivers the second message to Manrico: believing him killed in battle, Leonora will join a convent that night. Ignoring Azucena's pleas to remain and warnings that his wounds are still not healed, Manrico hurries off.

Aware of Leonora's plans, the Count di Luna arrives with his followers at the convent near Castellor. He is prepared to prevent Leonora and seize her by force: he vows that not even God shall keep her from him. Leonora arrives in the company of Inez and the nuns. Suddenly the Count emerges and bars her way. Then Manrico himself, whom all had thought dead, appears as battle begins. Manrico's soldiers arrive, and battle ensues. Manrico saves Leonora and whisks her away.

In Act III, the Count di Luna plans an assault on castle Castellor, where Manrico, Leonora, and the rebels are located. Azucena is found near his camp and brought to him. Recognizing her as Manrico's mother, the Count prepares her punishment.

In the castle, Manrico and Leonora say their wedding vows privately. Suddenly, Ruiz brings news of Azucena's capture. Manrico leaves to save his mother.

In Act IV, Manrico is in prison awaiting death. Leonora arrives at the castle in the company of Ruiz, determined to save him. Leonora dismisses Ruiz. Manrico's voice is heard from the tower as he sings a farewell ballad to Leonora. She swears that her love for him shall defy even death.

Leonora conceals herself as the Count emerges from the tower. He loves Leonora and would even betray his duty to the Prince for her. As he wonders where she is, she abruptly steps out and confronts him. His surprise quickly turns to jealousy as she pleads for Manrico's life. She offers herself to the Count in return for Manrico's freedom if she can relate the news to him. The Count consents. He instructs a guard to free Manrico; as he is doing so, Leonora secretly swallows the poison she has concealed. She will belong to the Count, but only as a corpse. The Count and Leonora exit into the tower.

In the dungeon, Leonora arrives to tell Manrico he is free. When he learns she cannot go with him, he believes she has betrayed him and curses her. As the poison takes effect, Leonora reveals that she chose death rather than life with the Count. The Count overhears, and orders Manrico beheaded, forcing Azucena to watch.

REVENGE

As Act I begins, Ferrando tells the Count's soldiers how the old Count's younger son was believed bewitched by a woman later burned as a witch. Her daughter abducted the boy in revenge, and a child's skeleton was found on the pyre. The daughter vanished, and the soldiers still fear her ghost.

In Act II, Azucena tells Manrico that her mother was burned for supposedly bewitching the old Count's son and died crying, "Avenge me!" Azucena stole the Count's child, but in a vision of her mother's death she threw her own child into the flames by mistake. When Manrico asks who he really is then, she insists he is her son, then urges him to kill the Count if they fight again. Urgent news calls Manrico away.

In Act III, Azucena stumbles into di Luna's camp and is questioned as a possible spy. When the Count asks about the noble child stolen years earlier, she betrays herself, and Ferrando recognizes her as the woman who kidnapped the Count's brother. Realizing she is Manrico's mother and his brother's killer, the Count prepares her punishment.

In Castellor, Manrico hears of Azucena's capture and leaves to save her.

In Act IV, Manrico and Azucena await death. The Count orders Manrico beheaded and forces Azucena to watch. She reveals the truth: "He was your brother! Mother, you are avenged!"



Artist Profiles



MARCELO PUENTE | Manrico

Argentinian-Spanish tenor Marcelo Puente has performed on leading international stages including the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Opéra national de Paris, Teatro alla Scala, Teatro Colón, Teatro Real, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Canadian Opera Company, and Opera Australia. Renowned for his performances in the spinto-dramatic repertoire, Puente's roles include Cavaradossi, Don José, Radamès, Don Álvaro, Calaf and Pinkerton. His 2026/27 season includes Cavaradossi in *Tosca* in Warsaw, *Otello* with Calgary Opera, and Pinkerton with Greek National Opera.



KIRSTEN LEBLANC | Leonora

Described as a “major vocal revelation” (*Le Devoir*), soprano Kirsten LeBlanc is recognized for her rich, powerful voice, and musical versatility. Recent highlights include her mainstage début with the Canadian Opera Company, in the titular role of Bilodeau's *La Reine-garçon*, and return to Opéra de Montréal for Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as Donna Anna. Upcoming, Kirsten returns to the Canadian Opera Company as Miss Jessel in Britten's *The Turn of the Screw*.



GRANT YOUNGBLOOD | Conte di Luna

Baritone Grant Youngblood returns to Pacific Opera Victoria following his acclaimed company début in the title role of Rigoletto during the 2025/26 season. Recent engagements include Amonasro in *Aida* (Virginia Opera), Scarpia in *Tosca* (Opera Montana), the title role in *Rigoletto* (Eugene Opera), and the world première of Jerod Tate's *Shell Shaker* with Canterbury Voices and the Oklahoma City Philharmonic.



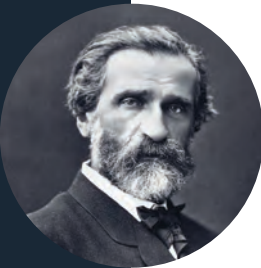
SIMONA GENGA | Azucena

Italian-Canadian mezzo-soprano Simona Genga possesses an “exceptional and rare voice” known for its “vocal plushness, amplitude and range” (Ludwig van Toronto / *Opera Canada*). Recently, Simona returned to the Canadian Opera Company as Giovanna in Verdi's *Rigoletto*, making her Santa Fe Opera début with the same role through their prestigious Apprentice Artist Program. This season, Genga makes company and role débuts with Pacific Opera Victoria (Azucena in Verdi's *Il trovatore*), and Calgary Opera (Emilia in Verdi's *Otello*).



ADAM LAU | Ferrando

Chinese-American bass Adam Lau, praised for his “cellar-deep sound” (*Post Alley*), has earned international acclaim on opera and concert stages. A First Prize winner of the George London Competition, Jensen Vocal Competition, and the Palm Springs Opera Guild Competition, Lau’s upcoming season includes Ferrando in *Il trovatore* at Pacific Opera Victoria, *Maria Stuarda* at the Metropolitan Opera, Timur in *Turandot* with North Carolina Opera, Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Piedmont Opera, and The King in *Aida* with Lyric Opera of Kansas City.



GIUSEPPE VERDI | Composer

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901) was an Italian composer and one of the most influential figures in opera history. Celebrated for his dramatic intensity, memorable melodies, and vivid characterization, Verdi created some of the repertoire’s most enduring works, including *Rigoletto*, *La traviata*, and *Aida*. *Il trovatore*, premièred in Rome in 1853, combines soaring lyricism with a gripping story of love, rivalry, revenge, and fate.



SALVADORE CAMMARANO | Librettist

Salvatore Cammarano (1801–1852) was an Italian playwright and one of the leading opera librettists of his generation. Best known for his collaborations with Gaetano Donizetti, including *Lucia di Lammermoor*, he also worked with Verdi on *Alzira*, *La battaglia di Legnano*, and *Luisa Miller*. Cammarano wrote the libretto for *Il trovatore* in 1852, but died shortly before the work was completed.





LEONE EMANUELE BARDARE | Librettist

Leone Emanuele Bardare (1820–after 1874) was an Italian poet and librettist best remembered for his contribution to *Il trovatore*. Following Salvatore Cammarano's death in 1852, Bardare worked under Verdi's direction to complete and revise the libretto. His additions included important passages for Leonora and Count di Luna, helping shape the opera into the form audiences know today.



ANTONIO GARCÍA GUTIÉRREZ | Original Author

Antonio García Gutiérrez (1813–1884) was a Spanish playwright and poet whose Romantic drama *El trovador* inspired Verdi's opera. Premiered in Madrid in 1836, the play brought García Gutiérrez considerable success with its turbulent story of hidden identities, doomed love, family rivalry, and revenge. Verdi was captivated by its dramatic possibilities and chose it as the basis for his opera.



GIUSEPPE PIETRAROIA | Conductor

Canadian conductor Giuseppe Pietraroia is Principal Conductor of Pacific Opera Victoria, where he has held leadership roles since 2003. Known for his versatility, musicality, and leadership across orchestral and operatic stages, he has also served as Associate Conductor with Pacific Opera and the Victoria Symphony, and Music Director of the Victoria Choral Society. In 2024, Pietraroia received the John Mears Achievement in Music Award at the Greater Victoria Regional Arts Awards.



BRENNA CORNER | Stage Director

Brenna Corner is an international stage director and Artistic Director of Pacific Opera Victoria. She made her company debut with *The Little Prince* and is known for bold, emotionally clear storytelling across Canada, the US and Europe. Past directing credits include *Hansel & Gretel* (Vancouver Opera), *The Handmaid's Tale* (Detroit Opera Theatre), *Madama Butterfly* (Los Angeles Opera), *Dead Man Walking* (Israeli National Opera), and *Carmen* (The Atlanta Opera). She is also a certified Fight Director.



OLIVIER LANDREVILLE | Set Designer

A renowned set designer whose work spans theatre, opera, television, and circus, Olivier Landreville is celebrated for his imaginative, story-driven designs. His credits include *Carmen*, *Faust*, and *La bohème* with Opéra de Montréal, as well as productions with Cirque du Soleil and The 7 Fingers. Olivier returns to Pacific Opera Victoria after making his company debut with *Carmen*.



MARTIN PEKLEDINAZ | Costume Designer

Detroit-born Martin Pakledinaz (1953–2012) was an acclaimed costume designer whose work appeared at the Metropolitan Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, and Salzburg Festival. His extensive theatre and dance credits included Broadway, New York City Ballet, and Pacific Northwest Ballet. Pakledinaz received Tony Awards for *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, alongside Drama Desk, Obie, Lucille Lortel, Helen Hayes, and other honours.



SOPHIE TANG | Lighting Designer

Sophie Tang is an award-winning lighting designer working in theatre, opera and dance. She has worked with companies including Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, Vancouver Opera, Pacific Opera, Arts Club Theatre, Bard on the Beach and so on. For Pacific Opera: *The Little Prince*. Other credits: *La bohème*, *The Pearl Fishers*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Vancouver Opera); *The Handmaid's Tale* (Banff Centre & Detroit Opera); and *Tao of the World*, *Salesman in China* (Stratford Festival). Portfolio: sophieyufeitang.com



S. KATY TUCKER | Projection Designer

Video and Projection Designer S. Katy Tucker makes her Pacific Opera Victoria début this season. Her work has appeared on Broadway and at leading international companies, including The Metropolitan Opera, Teatro alla Scala, the Canadian Opera Company, San Francisco Opera, Sydney Opera House, and Washington National Opera. Recent productions include *Smash*, Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, *Tannhäuser*, *Turandot*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*.



JACQUES LEMAY | Fight Director

Mr. Lemay has directed and/or choreographed hundreds of theatre, opera, and dance productions across Canada for stage, film, and television including 31 productions for Pacific Opera Victoria. A former Artistic Director of the Charlottetown Festival, he is a founder of three performing arts programs across Canada, including the Canadian College of Performing Arts. He has directed and staged numerous national and international large scale events including Olympic Games and Royal Visits. An award winning choreographer, he is a recipient of the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal and a member of the Order of Canada.



Read extended bios and meet our artists online.



KIMBERLEY-ANN BARTCZAK | Chorus Director & Principal Coach

A native of Montreal, Kimberley-Ann Bartczak is a conductor, pianist, and vocal coach. Newly appointed Artistic Director for the Victoria Children's Choir, Kimberley-Ann has a busy but fulfilling work schedule. She is also the Principal Coach and Music Administrator at Pacific Opera Victoria, a musician with the Victoria Symphony, and on music staff as Conductor and Répétiteur at The Glimmerglass Festival. Always with a smile, she has a passion for sharing music with the younger generation.



MARIJKA ASBEEK BRUSSE | Stage Manager

Based in Vancouver, Marijka is delighted to return to Pacific Opera, having previously worked on *Turn of the Screw* (SM), *For a Look or a Touch* (ASM), *Flight of the Hummingbird* (SM), and *Fidelio* (ASM). Other highlights include *Wozzeck* (ASM, Canadian Opera Company), *Take This Waltz* (SM, Ne.Sans Opera & Dance), *La traviata* (SM, Vancouver Opera), *Silent Light* (SM, Banff Centre for Performing Arts) and *The Overcoat* (ASM, Canadian Stage / Tapestry Opera / Vancouver Opera).



GISELLE CLARKE-TRENAMAN | Assistant Stage Manager

Giselle is thrilled to return to Pacific Opera Victoria after *Rigoletto*. She received a 2025 Jessie Award for Significant Artistic Achievement in Stage Management (TYA). Recent credits with Presentation House Theatre include *The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe*, *Cat Killer*, *So, How Should I Be?* and *Learning and Forgetting*, as well as tours of *Jack and the Magic Bean*, *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Baking Time*. She is the founder of Black History Matters.



KATIE SCHMIDT | Assistant Stage Manager

Katie is based in Winnipeg, Treaty One Territory, a graduate of the University of Winnipeg, and has worked in Stage Management since 2018. She is excited to be working with Pacific Opera Victoria for the first time. Recent credits include: *Fiddler on the Roof* (Stage Manager, Rainbow Stage); *Rubaboo: A Métis Cabaret* (Stage Manager, Royal MTC with Persephone Theatre); *The Lightning Thief* and *Gather* (Stage Manager, MTYP.) Love and thanks to Mom, Dad, Raya, and Felix.

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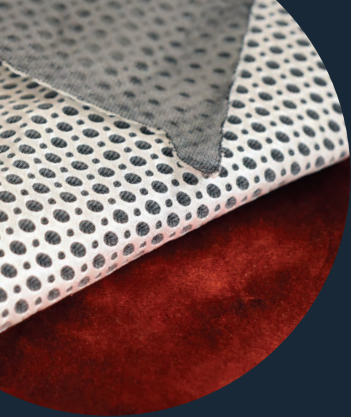


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Andriana Chuchman as Eurydice, Suzanne Rigden as Amore, with members of the Pacific Opera Chorus in *Orpheus & Eurydice*.
Pacific Opera Victoria, 2026. Emily Cooper Photography.



FROM LEFT: Heather Fisher, Paula Bosenberg, Mark Horne K.C., Fiona Hunter, Caroline Deane, John F. Coupar

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Andriana Chucman as
Eurydice with a dancer
from Ballet Victoria in
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2026. Photo by Emily
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What started as an ambitious goal of \$2 million is now within reach, thanks to the generosity of those who quietly stepped forward over the past year.

Today, we are delighted to share this opportunity with our entire community, and invite you to join those who have already helped bring us this far.

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Andriana Chuchman as Eurydice
and Christian Sanders as Orpheus
in *Orpheus & Eurydice*, Pacific Opera
Victoria, 2026, Photo by Emily
Cooper Photography



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Pacific Opera Victoria works and creates on the traditional lands of the ɫəkwəŋən speaking people, now known as the Songhees and Xwsepsem Nations.