

The Little Red Dress: Performances of Gender in Willy Decker's Production of *La Traviata*

Estella CIOBANU
Ovidius University of Constanța

Abstract: *This paper examines the emblematic use of costume in Willy Decker's production of La Traviata for the Salzburg Festival of 2005, subsequently revived by De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam (2009) and The Metropolitan Opera, New York (2010). I argue that on The Met stage both the choristers' (as well as Flora's and the male soloists') standard dressing in black male attire, irrespective of gender, and the use and abuse of a knee-length red dress as iconic of Violetta, construe gender as a 'garment' that can be put on or off at will (or perhaps 'as necessary'), though only by some. Gender is literally performed – in Judith Butler's sense – in this production, and with it so is the stereotyped – courtesan – identity of Violetta.*

Keywords: *La Traviata; Metropolitan Opera; Willy Decker (stage director); gender construction; gender performance (Judith Butler); masculine "sameness unto itself" (Luce Irigaray);*