There's still time to sign up for the Nov. 19 Riderwood Excursion to Maryland Opera Studio's *Rape of Lucretia*

OPERA AT RIDERWOOD

ENCORE OPERA NOTES
1:00 p.m.
NOVEMBER 13, 2026

HAMLET

NEXT WEEK IN ENCORE
November 20, 2026

FALSTAFF
Giuseppe VERDI

Composer: Ambroise Thomas - Libretto: Jules Barbier and Michel Carre
In French with Subtitles – 176 minutes
Notes compiled by John Szabo

Opera at Riderwood Opera's operas based on Shakespeare plays continues with Ambroise Thomas' romantic and rarely performed "Hamlet," which follows the young prince as he seeks to avenge his father's murder by his own uncle, leading to tragedy. Critics celebrate Natalie Dessay for an astonishing, monumental portrayal as Hamlet's love Ophelie in this 2004 production from the Gran Teatre del Liceu. Simon Keenlyside delivers a masterclass in both singing and acting, portraying the title character with an intense, raw, and magnetic edge that anchors the entire production.

Cast

Hamlet - Simon Keenlyside
Ophelie – Natalie Dessay
Queen Gertrude – Beatrice Uria-Monzon
King Claudius – Alain Vernhes
Laerte – Daniil Shtoda
Le Spectre – Markus Hollop
Marcellus – Gustavo Pena
Horatio – Lluis Sintes
Polonius – Celestino Varela
Conductor – Bertrand de Billy with the Gran Teatre del Liceu Orchestra and Chorus

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Synopsis

Act I

King Hamlet of Denmark has passed away and his widow, Gertrude, is remarrying her brother-in-law, Claudius, after only two months. The late king and Gertrude's son, Prince Hamlet, is upset about his mother's remarriage and so his love, Ophélie, comforts him. Her brother, Laërte, interrupts them and says that he is being sent to Norway as an envoy. He entrusts Ophélie to take care of the melancholic Hamlet. Hamlet's friend, Horatio, and a sentry, Marcellus, tell the isolated prince that they saw the ghost of his father the previous night. As the clock strikes midnight, the ghost also appears to Hamlet, telling him that he was poisoned by Claudius then asking him to take vengeance on his murderous brother but to spare his widow.

You're invited to join us for a post-opera discussion in the Art Gallery.

Act II

Hamlet feigns madness in front of King Claudius and Gertrude while he devises a plan to discover the truth. He decides to engage a troupe of actors to perform a play, The Murder of Gonzago, which tells a story similar to how he imagines the murder of his father was carried out. He is so focused on the play that he gives no attention to Ophélie, who decides that she wants to leave the court but is persuaded by the Queen to stay. During the performance, Claudius, Gertrude and the rest of the audience see how the poison is administered and how the assassin places the crown on his head. Claudius turns pale and commands the play to stop. Hamlet believes that this proves his guilt and attacks him.

Act III

Hamlet wonders why he didn't kill the king when he had the opportunity. Thinking about his father returning as a ghost, he reflects on the mystery of life and death. A second opportunity to kill Claudius arises when the king starts kneeling in prayer, asking his brother to advocate him to the eternal judge. Worried that Claudius' soul may be saved if he is killed while in prayer, Hamlet once again delays his revenge. Overhearing his uncle's words, he learns that Ophélie's father was complicit in the murder. Queen Gertrude tries to persuade Hamlet to marry Ophélie but the prince refuses. He tells Ophélie to instead enter a nunnery, then he tries to force his mother to admit her guilt. As Hamlet threatens her, he sees his father's ghost, who reminds him that Gertrude must be spared.

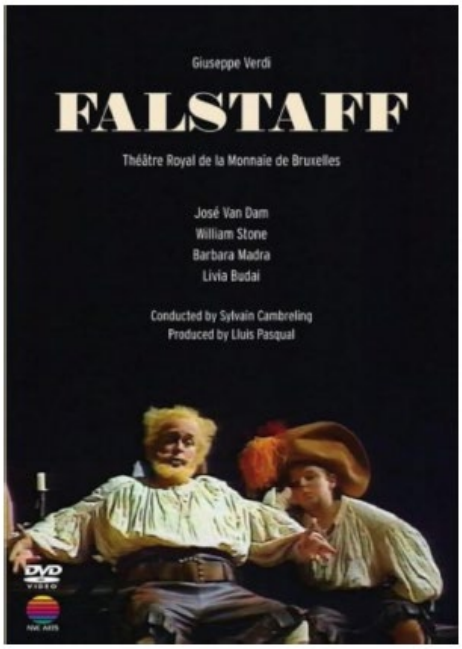
Act IV

After Hamlet's rejection, Ophélie has gone mad with grief. She cuts her wrist and, as she dies, she sings a mournful ballad about water sprites who lure their lovers to their deaths, dragging them underwater until they drown.

Act V

Hamlet comes across two gravediggers preparing a new grave, but they do not know who has died. The prince contemplates the grief that he must have put Ophélie through by leaving her, though he does not yet know that she has killed herself. Having returned from Norway, Laërte has learned of his sister's death. He challenges Hamlet to a duel, but they are interrupted by Ophélie's funeral procession. The prince finally realizes that the newly-dug grave is meant for the woman he loved. In despair, he kills Claudius, before taking his own life.

NEXT WEEK



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