

CABALLÉ

MONTSERRAT
CABALLÉ AND
THE OPERATIC
COSTUMES OF
THE MUSEUM
OF PERFORMING
ARTS

GAUDÍ
PALAU
GÜELL



Diputació
Barcelona

Introduction

Barcelona Provincial Council Theatre Institute's Museum of Performing Arts presents an exceptional installation at Palau Güell, dedicated to the stage costumes worn by the legendary soprano Montserrat Caballé.

Montserrat Caballé's costumes brought to life some of the most widely admired female characters in opera, such as Maria Stuarda, Anna Bolena, Elisabeth of Valois and Tosca. The oldest costume on display is a design by the renowned English writer and costume designer Jean Hunnisett for the version of Richard Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* which premièred at the Vienna Opera in 1965. The other pieces were used until the 1980s, and were seen on stages such as the Théâtre Antique d'Orange, La Scala in Milan, the Metropolitan Opera House in New York, the Royal Opera House in London, the Marseille Opera and the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, where Caballé wore these costumes.

The exhibition also highlights the importance of costume design in the creation of the character, focusing specifically on the relationship between Caballé and her operatic wardrobe.



Montserrat Caballé and the operatic costumes of the Museum of Performing Arts through narrative time

Accuracy is one of the crucial aspects of the operatic wardrobe when preparing historical costumes. It is increasingly important to present an almost exact reproduction of the costumes of the period depicted on stage, despite the emergence of anachronistic costumes and new interpretations in space and time of traditional operas. The use of modern materials and fabrics when representing costumes from other centuries is one of the skilful deceptions involved in the production of theatrical costumes.

The timeline presents a tour of the operatic clothing of the Museum of Performing Arts, arranged by period in which the plot of each opera is set. This enables us to appreciate the interpretation of history by the various periods of opera.

Operatic clothing has significant historical, aesthetic and scenic value, and lends the staging of the production a singular ambience and meaning. The items here belong to or are in the safekeeping of the Museum of Performing Arts, and are located on the timeline according to the period in which the opera for which they were originally designed is set, thereby writing a history of time through opera.



Turandot. Festival del Castell de Peralada, 2016. Photograph by Josep Aznar. Costume by Antonio Belart.



The Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte*. Teatre Lliure, 1984. Design by Fabià Puigserver.



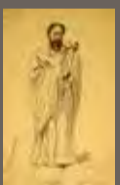
Tunic worn by Francisco Viñas when playing Radamés in *Aida*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1903.



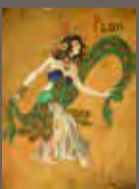
Creon for *Ædipus Rex*, ca. 1924. Design by Francesc Labarta i Planas.



Cassandre in *Les Troyens*. Covent Garden, 1957. Design by Mariano Andreu.



Druid in *Norma*. Design by Lluís Labarta i Grané.



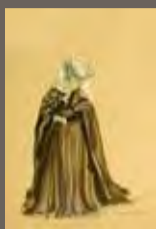
Flowermaidens in *Parsifal*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1913. Design by Alexandre Soler Marije.



Victoria de los Ángeles' dress and cape when playing Elisabeth in *Tannhäuser*. Bayreuther Festspiele, 1961.



Doublet worn by Manuel Ausensi when playing Alphonse XI of Castille in *La favorite*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1960.



Nurse in *Roméo et Juliette*, ca. 1960. Design by Maria Rosa García Casas.



Ramon Blanchart playing Iago in *Otello*. 1893. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1892.



Mrs Meg Page in *Falstaff*. La Monnaie, Brussels, 1987. Design by Fabià Puigserver.



Camisole and dress worn by Victoria de los Ángeles as Eva in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1950.



Costume worn by Hipólito Lazaro as the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1914.



Elisabetta di Valois in *Don Carlo*. Teatro de la Zarzuela, Madrid, 1985. Design by Fabià Puigserver.



Elisabetta in *Maria Stuarda*.
Teatre Lliure, 1990. Design by
César Olivar.



Montserrat Caballé's costume
for Elisabetta in *Roberto Devereux*.
Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968.
She subsequently wore it when
playing Elisabetta di Valois in
Don Carlo. Royal Opera House,
London, 1971.



Montserrat Caballé's costume
for Elisabetta in *Roberto Devereux*.
Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968.
She subsequently used it when
playing Elisabetta di Valois in
Don Carlo. Théâtre Antique,
Orange, 1984.



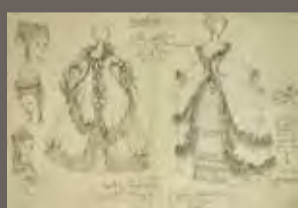
Montserrat Caballé's costume
for Elisabetta di Valois in *Don
Carlo*. Théâtre Antique, Orange,
1984. She later wore it in her
final operatic performance on
stage, as Catherine of Aragon
in *Henry VIII*. Gran Teatre del
Liceu, 2002.



Montserrat Caballé's costume for Maria Stuarda in *Maria Stuarda*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1969. She subsequently used it for Elisabetta di Valois in *Don Carlo*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1971; Staatsoper Berlin, 1977.



Montserrat Caballé's costume for Lucrezia Borgia in *Lucrezia Borgia*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1970.



Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Teatre del Casino de l'Aliança del Poblenou, 1967. Design by Fabià Puigserver.



Manuel Ausensi playing Renato in *Un ballo in maschera*. Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City, 1960.



Costume worn by Celestino Sarobe as Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1923.



Costume worn by Mercè Capsir as Manon *Manon Lescaut*. Teatre XX, Girona, 1945.



Supervia as Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*. La Scala, Milan, 1926. Photograph by Mario Castagneri.



Woman in *La Cenerentola*, ca. 1960. Design by Artur Carbonell.



Montserrat Caballé's costume when playing Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1984.



Costumes for *Carmen*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1888. Designs by Ricard Moragas.



Costume worn by María Cid in *Goyescas*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1939. Costume by Manuel Muntañola.



Costume worn by Victoria de los Ángeles as Mimi in *La Bohème*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1946.



Floria Tosca in *Tosca*. Design by Isidre Prunés. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 2014.



Dress worn by Victoria de los Ángeles when playing Violetta Valéry in *La Traviata*. New York, 1956.



Adriana Lecouvreur. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1937. Photograph by Pau Barceló. Costume by Maria de Matteis.



Montserrat Caballé's costume when playing Floria Tosca in *Tosca*. Metropolitan Opera House, New York, 1985. A simpler version of the same costume was worn by the singer for the same character in several international operas.



Kimono worn by Victoria de los Angeles when playing Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly*. Marseille, 1951.



Marie Sass playing Selika in *L'Africaine*. Paris National Opera, 1865. Photograph by the Debas Brothers.

“I can only be who I am, and these days maybe not even that. Because people, the audience, only see a myth when I go on stage. They don’t see me, but “la Caballé” – something that is not entirely real. And then I look towards the auditorium, and I say to myself: *What can I give them tonight?* The answer is always the same: *Only the truth.* It’s the only thing you can offer and I think it’s the only thing the audience understands.”

Montserrat Caballé

Roberto Devereux

Elisabetta

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968

Lucrezia Borgia

Lucrezia Borgia

Don Carlo

Elisabetta di Valois

· Théâtre Antique d'Orange, 1984



Montserrat Caballé caracteritzada d'Elisabetta, reina d'Anglaterra, a *Roberto Devereux*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968.

«He esperat tants anys aquest moment; he fet tantes coses per venir aquí; he hagut de treballar per tot Europa per arribar al Liceu.»

Montserrat Caballé

En referència al seu debut al Gran Teatre del Liceu, l'any 1962.

Montserrat Caballé. Casta diva.

Roberto Devereux

Elisabetta

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968

Lucrezia Borgia

Lucrezia Borgia

Don Carlo

Elisabetta di Valois

· Théâtre Antique, Orange, 1984

Montserrat Caballé playing Elisabetta, Queen of England, in *Roberto Devereux*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968.

“I have waited for this moment for so many years; I have done so many things to come here; I have had to work all over Europe to get to the Liceu.”

Montserrat Caballé

In reference to her debut at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in 1962.

Montserrat Caballé. Casta diva.



Vissi d'arte, vissi d'amore

The operatic costume collection of the Museum of Performing Arts would not be complete without some of the theatrical costumes worn by the greatest Catalan diva of all time. Montserrat Caballé lived for her art and her love of the performing arts, and she shared her gift for performance with the whole world, from Buenos Aires to Japan, and invariably had a special respect for her own country. The Gran Teatre del Liceu was always able to enjoy Caballé at her warmest and most intimate, and all the costumes acquired by the museum (except one) are documented as having been worn on the stages of the Barcelona theatre. The private collection is therefore an important acquisition for both the personal history of the magnificent Catalan soprano and for the preservation of the history of opera in Catalonia.

“La Caballé” is and will always be an immortal voice in the memory of all her audiences, ranging from those who only heard her in recordings to those who saw her live on countless occasions. Meanwhile, for all those who knew her personally, Montserrat, the persistent, humane and powerful woman, whose courage increased with every attempt to intimidate her, is sorely missed every day. Montserrat Caballé died on 6 October 2018, at the age of eighty-five after singing professionally for over forty years, but her spark in the international history of opera and in Catalan memory has not been extinguished.

Don Carlo

Elisabetta di Valois

· Théâtre Antique d'Orange, 1984
Vestit original de la producció de *Don Carlo* de la temporada 1981-82 del MET de Nova York, amb Mirella Freni en el paper d'Elisabetta, obsequiat probablement a Montserrat Caballé després de la seva posada en escena l'any 1984.

Henry VIII

Catherine d'Aragon

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 2002.
Estrena a Barcelona i darrera òpera en la qual va actuar la cantant.



Montserrat Caballé interpretant Catherine d'Aragon a *Henry VIII*, la darrera òpera que va representar sobre els escenaris. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 2002.

«La soprano va rebre una càlida acollida per part del públic que omplia la sala, que li va dedicar forts aplaudiments i braves al final de la funció, mentre els seus fans li agraïen la seva dedicació al Liceu amb una pluja de papers amb la frase "Montserrat: gràcies pels 40 anys de fidelitat", en referència al 40è aniversari del seu debut al Gran Teatre de la Rambla.»

Marino Rodríguez

La Vanguardia, 5 de gener de 2002

Don Carlo

Elisabetta di Valois

· Théâtre Antique, Orange, 1984

Original costume from the production of *Don Carlo* in the 1981-82 season of the New York Met, with Mirella Freni in the role of Elisabetta, probably presented to Montserrat Caballé after its staging in 1984.

Henry VIII

Catherine d'Aragon

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 2002. The production premiered in Barcelona, and was the last opera in which the singer performed.

Montserrat Caballé playing Catherine of Aragon in *Henry VIII*, the last opera in which she performed on stage. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 2002.



“The soprano received a warm welcome from the audience that filled the auditorium, with loud applause and braves at the end of the performance, while her fans thanked her for her dedication to the Liceu with a shower of papers bearing the phrase “Montserrat: thank you for 40 years of loyalty”, referring to the fortieth anniversary of her debut at the Gran Teatre on the Rambla.”

Marino Rodríguez

La Vanguardia, 5 January 2002

Prima donna assoluta

Montserrat Caballé was a force of nature – the perfect combination of innate talent and tireless perseverance. Like a supernova, the light of the twentieth century's last great operatic diva shone with superlative power until it became an incombustible spark – an indelible recollection in our memory.

Born in the Gràcia district of Barcelona in 1933, her interest in music was kindled during her childhood. Her family's difficulties with health and finances, which were made more acute by the unstable situation in Spain, did not stop the young and tenacious Caballé from becoming a conscientious and extraordinary singer. The Bertrand family sponsored the young student on the condition that if she ever became a great soprano, she would never forget her origins at the Gran Teatre del Liceu. Montserrat Caballé's career was an obstacle course, but with her characteristic diligence and passion, she obtained the recognition and success she deserved, and she always shared them with her home city.

Her voice was that of a virtuoso, and it was heard in nearly four thousand performances, over a hundred roles and eight hundred songs, and is remembered by all due to the humanity and simplicity of the woman who possessed it.

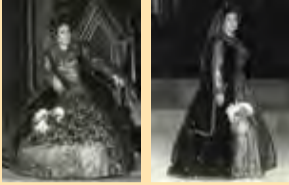
Roberto Devereux

Elisabetta

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968

Don Carlo

Elisabetta di Valois



Montserrat Caballé interpretant Elisabetta, reina d'Anglaterra, a *Roberto Devereux*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968.



Bianca Berini, en el paper de Sara, besant la mà de Montserrat Caballé, caracteritzada com a Elisabetta, reina d'Anglaterra, a *Roberto Devereux*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968.



Montserrat Caballé com a Elisabetta di Valois a *Don Carlo*. Portada de l'enregistrament conduït per Carlo Maria Giulini per a Angel Records l'any 1971.

«Se l'ha comparada amb Maria Callas; la utilització de la veu, la seva musicalitat i el seu temperament a *Roberto Devereux* justificaven la comparació. Les dues veus, però, són completament diferents, raó per la qual només hi ha una Callas i només hi ha una Caballé.»

John Ardoin

Opera, 3 de març de 1966

Roberto Devereux

Elisabetta

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968

Don Carlo

Elisabetta di Valois

Montserrat Caballé playing Elisabetta, Queen of England, in *Roberto Devereux*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968.

Bianca Berini, in the role of Sara, kissing the hand of Montserrat Caballé, playing Elisabetta, queen of England, in *Roberto Devereux*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1968.

Montserrat Caballé as Elisabetta di Valois in *Don Carlo*. Cover of the recording conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini for Angel Records in 1971.



“She has been compared to Maria Callas; her use of her voice, its musicality and its temperament in *Roberto Devereux* justified the comparison. The two voices are nevertheless completely different, which is why there is only one Callas and only one Caballé.”

John Ardoin

Opera, 3 March 1966

The construction of the character

Stage costumes are created in order to dress a character, or in other words, to transform a normal person into the subject of a narrative located in a specific place and period of time, with unique physical and essential characteristics. The spectator is presented with a series of visual clues that add value to the meaning of the work. Within the idiosyncrasy of the world of opera, the costumes are traditionally extravagant and attractive, and even suggestive when worn by the bolder protagonists. They are usually produced with extraordinary attention to detail.

Opera's great female characters were brought to life superbly by the vocal cords of Montserrat Caballé, who wore the costumes of unforgettable women including Elizabeth I of England, Floria Tosca and Turandot. Caballé had a substantial stage wardrobe, in which a single costume could become different characters, provided that they at least belonged to the same narrative period. Among the garments included here, Anne Boleyn and Elisabeth of Valois shared a costume, as did Elisabeth and Lucretia Borgia. Working with her own wardrobe meant that the soprano did not have a costume for each production or character, so she chose the most appropriate attire for each occasion from among her possessions. As a result, she was sometimes criticised on the grounds of a lack of harmony with the rest of the company, and was subject to particularly severe criticism in London when performing at the Royal Opera House.

These were undoubtedly veiled criticisms of her weight problems, as it was impossible to highlight any shortcomings in her voice.

Tosca

Floria Tosca

· Tòquio, 1979

· Metropolitan Opera, 1985



Montserrat Caballé és Flòria Tosca a *Tosca*.
Metropolitan Opera, 1985.
©James Heffernan.
Metropolitan Opera Archives

«Feia setmanes que la pregunta més important de l'escena operística era: "Cantarà de debò Montserrat Caballé?". Que aquesta actuació acaparés l'atenció de tothom [...] ens dona una idea de la seva talla com a "última prima donna". Cal dir que sí, que va cantar, i meravellosament [...]»

Michael Redmond

The Star-Ledger, 25 de setembre de 1985

Tosca

Floria Tosca

· Tokyo, 1979

· Metropolitan Opera, 1985

Montserrat Caballé as Floria Tosca in *Tosca*.

Metropolitan Opera, 1985.

©James Heffernan. Metropolitan Opera Archives

“For weeks now, the most important question on the opera scene has been, ‘Will Caballé actually sing?’ It is a measure of her stature as “the last of the prima donnas,” [...] that this engagement could so dominate everybody’s attention. It remains to be said that yes, she did sing, and gloriously.”

Michael Redmond

The Star-Ledger, 25 September 1985



The stage costumes

The Museum of Performing Arts preserves the most tangible memory of performances in costumes. These materials and textures have been donated by famous actors, dancers and singers in the history of the Catalan performing arts, and bear witness to the country's theatrical memory, but also to some incredible personal stories.

Montserrat Caballé's unique costumes are the zenith of an extensive and important collection, which includes operatic names of the highest order, such as Victoria de los Ángeles, Francesc Viñas and Hipólito Lázaro. The collection consists of unique items of clothing which transformed the performers into characters when they were worn, and today they enable us to evoke them in our memory.

With her unique breathing, vocal and expressive abilities, Caballé was acclaimed as an absolute diva on stages worldwide; theatres including the Metropolitan in New York, La Scala in Milan and the Théâtre Antique in Orange were the settings for some of the soprano's most impressive triumphs. Preserving her personal wardrobe therefore means preserving the history of twentieth-century opera. The costumes allow us to invoke scenes that made entire audiences hold their breath in our collective memory, and at the same time, they provide us with unique details of the performance, such as the exceptional nature of the specific production, or the costume designer's personal style. The fashion and working methods used with textiles in each period can be found in the museum's collection, and write a further chapter in the history of the performing arts.

Maria Stuarda

Maria Stuarda

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1969

Don Carlo

Elisabetta di Valois

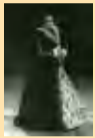
· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1971



Montserrat Caballé as Maria Stuarda a *Maria Stuarda*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1969.



Montserrat Caballé i Ina del Campo caracteritzades com a Maria Stuarda i Elisabetta a *Maria Stuarda*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1969.



Montserrat Caballé representant Elisabetta di Valois a *Don Carlo*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1971.

«Prodigant amb infinita habilitat les seves proverbials realitzacions, que van des del filat més tènue i exquisit fins a les morbides intensitats de timbre en el registre mitjà i els greus accents de bategant intensitat, [a *Maria Stuarda*] l'artista ens va convèncer totalment, fins al punt que trobéssim lògic que cada una de les seves intervencions fos coronada per un doll d'aplaudiments i crits que va interrompre periòdicament la representació.»

Xavier Montsalvatge

Montserrat Caballé. Casta diva

Maria Stuarda

Maria Stuarda

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1969

Don Carlo

Elisabetta di Valois

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1971

Montserrat Caballé as Maria Stuarda in *Maria Stuarda*.

Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1969.

Montserrat Caballé and Ina del Campo as Maria Stuarda and Elisabetta in *Maria Stuarda*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1969.

Montserrat Caballé playing Elisabetta di Valois in *Don Carlo*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1971.



“Using infinite skill to deploy her proverbial performances, ranging from the most tenuous and exquisite timbre to the morbid intensities of timbre in the middle register and the deeper accents of beating intensity, [in *Maria Stuarda*] the artist convinced us completely, to the extent that we found it entirely understandable that each of her contributions culminated in a torrent of applause and cries that regularly interrupted the performance.”

Xavier Montsalvatge

Montserrat Caballé. Casta diva

The artist's wardrobe

Montserrat Caballé suffered from serious health problems from a young age. As a consequence, she had a reputation as a diva who was erratic and temperamental, due to being forced to cancel her performances as a result of illness on numerous occasions.

These problems also led to problems with her weight for which she would be judged and criticised throughout her career, like other great opera singers such as Maria Callas before her.

Her physique made it essential for the diva to have her own wardrobe tailored to her measurements. Unlike her contemporaries, who often wore costumes from the theatre, production, or which had been rented, Caballé travelled around the world with her own unique costumes, cloaks, and wigs in her suitcase. She aimed to impose her figure on stage where a comfortable costume that met the needs of the character, as well as the singer's personal tastes of sobriety and elegance.

A performer using their own costumes was not unheard of in the world of the performing arts, but had been more common among the great actors and singers of previous generations. As a result, the museum contains many of Victoria de los Ángeles' opera and concert costumes – some of which were adjusted to adapt to the physical changes the singer experienced over the years. There are also clear signs that Caballé's outfits that we have preserved have been altered, for reasons of both aesthetic interest and physical necessity, as is evident in the photographs that have been preserved.

Der Rosenkavalier

Marschallin

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1984



Montserrat Caballé caracteritzada com a Marschallin a *Der Rosenkavalier*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1984.

« [...] la seva versió [de Marschallin] té la classe i la distinció de la dama que sent íntimament el pas del seu esplendor, sense dramatitzar mai la realitat. El seu concepte de la interpretació es basa en la subtillesa expressiva, per a la qual exerceix un admirable domini de la veu, enfocada sempre a la dicció resignada i plena de matisos, refinats i eloqüents.»

Joan Arnau

La Vanguardia, 10 de desembre de 1984

Der Rosenkavalier

Marschallin

· Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1984

Montserrat Caballé playing Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier*. Gran Teatre del Liceu, 1984.

« [...] Her version [of Marschallin] has the class and distinction of the lady who intimately feels the passing of her splendour, without ever dramatising reality. Her concept of the performance is based on expressive subtlety, to which end she exerts an admirable command of her voice, always focused on the resigned and full diction of refined and eloquent nuances.»

Joan Arnau

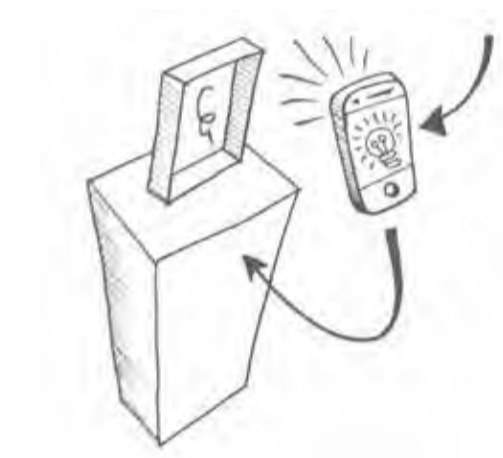
La Vanguardia, 10 December 1984



- Turn on the flashlight of your mobile



- Bring the light closer to the piece



- Pass the light through



- Project the image of the diva onto the wall



Credits

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