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AIDA

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Verdi's
AIDA
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Edited by Burton D. Fisher
Principal lecturer, *Opera Journeys Lecture Series*

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Printed in the United States of America

WEB SITE: www.operajourneys.com E MAIL: operaj@bellsouth.net

“Aida is certainly not one of my worst operas....”

-Giuseppe Verdi, after the premiere of *Aida*

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a *Prelude*

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY's *AIDA*

AIDA is a phenomenon of musico-drama theater; it provides a magnificent blend of grand opera spectacle, such as a large cast with six major singing roles, a huge chorus and orchestra, three ballets, and exotic scenery and oriental ambience. Its characters portray powerful human passions as they confront the conflicts in their lives.

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY explores the greatness and magic of Verdi's ingenious 26th opera. The *Commentary and Analysis* offers pertinent biographical information about Verdi, his mind-set at the time of *AIDA*'s composition, the genesis of the opera, its premiere and performance history, and insightful story and character analysis.

The text also contains a *Brief Story Synopsis*, *Principal Characters in Aida*, and a *Story Narrative with Music Highlight Examples*, the latter containing original music transcriptions that are interspersed appropriately within the story's dramatic exposition. In addition, the text includes a *Discography*, *Videography*, and a *Dictionary of Opera and Musical Terms*.

The *Libretto* has been newly translated by the Opera Journeys staff with specific emphasis on retaining a literal translation, but also with the objective to provide a faithful translation in modern and contemporary English; in this way, the substance of the music drama becomes more intelligible. To enhance educational objectives, the *Libretto* also contains musical highlight examples interspersed within the drama's text.

The opera art form is the sum of many artistic expressions: theatrical drama, music, scenery, poetry, dance, acting and gesture. In opera, it is the composer who is the dramatist, using the emotive power of his music to express and portray intense human conflicts. Words evoke thoughts, but music provokes feelings; opera's sublime fusion of words, music and all the theatrical arts, by its very nature, provides powerful theater, an impact on one's sensibilities that can reach into the very depths of the human soul. Verdi's *AIDA*, certainly a crown jewel of his glorious operatic inventions, remains a masterpiece of the lyric theater, a tribute to the art form as well as to its ingenious composer.

Burton D. Fisher

Editor

OPERA CLASSICS LIBRARY

AIDA

Italian opera in four acts

**Music
by
Giuseppe Verdi**

Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni

**Premiere in Cairo on Christmas Eve
December 24, 1871**

Commentary and Analysis

Giuseppe Verdi was born in the village of Busseto in northwestern Italy in 1813, while the smoke of war was just clearing, and the continental armies' defeat of Napoleon was imminent. His musical career began after he demonstrated early talent at the piano, and within a short time he was substituting as organist at the local church.

By his mid-teens, his compositional talents emerged, and he began writing an eclectic assortment of band marches, piano pieces, and church music. At eighteen, the successful Busseto merchant, Antonio Barezzi, became his patron. Verdi moved into his home and provided singing and piano lessons to his daughter, Margherita. Very soon thereafter, Verdi and Margherita became affianced.

With Barezzi's patronage and support, Verdi applied to the Milan Conservatory, but he was rejected. He was a nonresident; he was four years above the entry age; his knowledge of theory was insufficient; and his piano playing style was deemed weak and too unorthodox. Nevertheless, he remained in Milan and began private studies in harmony and counterpoint with the renowned Vincenzo Lavigna, who had for many years been concert master at La Scala. At the age of twenty-two, Verdi returned to the provincial world of Busseto, married Margherita Barezzi, and was appointed to the post *maestro di musica*. He directed and composed for the local philharmonic society and gave private music lessons.

Verdi's first opera, *Oberto* (1839), indicated promise for the young, 26-year-old budding opera composer. Its success generated commissions from La Scala for three more operas. His second opera, the comic opera *Un Giorno di Regno* (1840), was received with indifference and failed disastrously. It was a comic opera composed during a period when he lost his wife and two children.

But it was his third opera, *Nabucco* (1842), that became an immediate and triumphant sensation and catapulted the young composer to immediate recognition. *Nabucco* expanded the *bel canto* school. It possesses plenty of vocal fireworks, but its focus is emotionalism rather than exhibitionism, with forceful and powerful characterizations. Verdi commented, "With this opera, my artistic career can truly be said to have begun." Indeed, Verdi developed into the musical colossus of Italy during his times.

Verdi's early operas all contained an underlying theme: a patriotic call for the liberation of his beloved Italy from the oppressive foreign rule of both France and Austria. Within the subtext of these operas, Verdi, with his operatic pen, sounded the alarm for Italy's freedom. Each story in those early operas was disguised with allegory and symbolism, and advocated individual liberty, freedom, and independence for Italy.

The suffering and struggling heroes and heroines in those early operas were metaphorically his beloved Italian compatriots.

For example, in *Giovanna d'Arco* (Joan of Arc), the French patriot Joan confronts the oppression of the English, her own French monarchy, and even the Church. The heroine is eventually martyred, but her plight was synonymous with Italy's struggle against its own oppression. In *Nabucco*, the suffering Hebrews enslaved by Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians were allegorically the Italian people themselves, similarly in bondage by foreign oppressors.

Verdi's Italian audiences easily read the underlying messages he had subtly injected between the lines of his text and nobly expressed through his musical language. At *Nabucco*'s premiere, at the end of the Hebrew slave chorus that expressed hope for salvation, "Va, pensiero!" ("Go, Hope!"), the audience wildly stopped the performance with inspired shouts of "Viva Italia!"—an explosion of nationalism that forced the authorities to assign extra police to later performances of the opera in order to prevent riots. The "Va, pensiero!" chorus, perhaps the most popular chorus in all opera, became the emotional and unofficial Italian national anthem, the musical inspiration for Italy's patriotic aspirations. Even the name V E R D I had a dual association: homage to the great maestro acclaimed as "Viva Verdi," and as an acrostic for *V*ittorio *E*manuele *R*e *D*'*I*talia, King Victor Emmanuel's return from exile an inspiration for Italian liberation.

During Verdi's first creative period, between the years 1839 and 1850, he composed fifteen operas: *Oberto* (1839); *Un Giorno di Regno* (1840); *Nabucco* (1842); *I Lombardi* (1843); *Ernani* (1844); *I Due Foscari* (1844); *Giovanna d'Arco* (1845); *Alzira* (1845); *Attila* (1846); *Macbeth* (1847); *I Masnadieri* (1847); *Il Corsaro* (1848); *La Battaglia di Legnano* (1849); *Luisa Miller* (1849); and *Stiffelio* (1850).

As the mid-nineteenth century unfolded, Verdi, now in his forties, had become the most popular opera composer in the world. In his early operatic style, he had emphatically preserved the *bel canto* traditions maintained by his immediate predecessors, Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti. Verdi became the conservator of a glorious tradition in which voice and melody remained supreme. Those were the vital and dynamic forces that represented the soul of the Italian operatic art form.

As the 1850s evolved, Verdi felt satisfied that his objective for Italian independence was soon to be realized. He sensed the fulfillment of Italian liberation and unification in the forthcoming *Risorgimento*, that historic revolutionary event that established Italian national independence. Thematically, Verdi's opera texts were poised for a transition, and he began to seek and progress toward more truthful characterizations and more fully integrated dramas.

Verdi began a relentless search for new operatic subjects. He sought unusual, gripping characters placed in confrontational scenes that would provide more profound dramatic conflict. As such, he abandoned the heroic pathos and nationalistic themes of

his early operas to seek subjects that would be bold to the extreme, subjects with greater dramatic and psychological depth, subjects that accented spiritual values, intimate humanity, and tender emotions. He was unceasing in his crusade to create an expressiveness and acute delineation of the human soul that had never before been realized on the opera stage. New characters would appear: hunchbacked jesters, consumptive courtesans, and viciously vengeful gypsies.

Beginning with *Rigoletto* (1851), Verdi entered his “middle period,” in which his operas began to contain heretofore unknown dramatic qualities and intensities, and a profound characterization of humanity that he integrated with his brilliant, exceptional lyricism. His creative art began to flower into a new maturity with operas that would eventually become some of the best-loved works ever written for the lyric theater: *Rigoletto* (1851); *Il Trovatore* (1853); *La Traviata* (1853); *I Vespri Siciliani* (1855); *Simon Boccanegra* (1857); *Aroldo* (1857); *Un Ballo in Maschera* (1859); *La Forza del Destino* (1862); *Don Carlos* (1867); and *Aida* (1871).

As Verdi entered the twilight of his career, he epitomized the words of Robert Browning’s Rabbi Ben Ezra: “Grow old along with me. The best is yet to be.” Verdi triumphed during the twilight of his career with his two final operas that became testaments to his incessant creative energy and genius: *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893), operas possessing an unprecedented integration between text and music but simultaneously maintaining Italian opera’s vital truth. These operas were driven by a profound emphasis on melody, lyricism, and vocal beauty.

In an illustrious and monumental opera career that virtually dominated the nineteenth century, Verdi composed a total of 28 operas before his death in 1901 at the age of 88.

In the 1870s, as Verdi embarked on the composition of *Aida*, the Italian operatic landscape was grim. The *bel canto* genre that dominated Italian opera during the first half of the nineteenth century was no longer in vogue. Other than Verdi’s, virtually no Italian operas of any lasting consequence were being composed with the possible exception of Boito’s *Mefistofele* (1868) and Ponchielli’s *La Gioconda* (1876).

In France, Meyerbeer’s “spectacle” operas were the rage, and Gounod had introduced the new style of the French *lyrique* with *Faust* (1859). In Germany, Wagner had mesmerized opera and the music world with his music dramas: *Tristan und Isolde* (1865), *Die Meistersinger* (1868), and the first *Ring* installments, *Das Rheingold* (1870) and *Die Walküre* (1870).

Wagner’s transformations of opera into music drama revolutionized the lyric theater. Verdi considered Wagner’s new ideas, theories, and esthetics an assault on the very foundations and traditions of Italian opera. In the nineteenth century, an assault on Italian opera was a personal attack on Verdi himself. Nevertheless, the great Italian opera master refused to be inoculated with the Wagner virus. He would not permit Wagner to be his *bête noire*, nor would he become Wagner’s disciple or imitator.

Verdi could not deny Wagner's existence or influence, yet he totally disagreed with Wagner's solutions and remedies for opera's ills. Essentially, Wagner's revolutionary theories and conceptions about music drama, his new music of the future, stressed a dramatic integrity that would derive from a profound synthesis between text and music, and the symphonic weaving of leitmotifs, or leading motives.

Wagner expounded his theories in the "Gesamtkunstwerk," the "total art work," an ideal in which all of the arts became unified into the musico-dramatic structure. He conceived opera as a synthesis of the theatrical arts, therefore, a fusion of poetry, music, acting, scenery, and drama, with its idealistic whole equal to the sum of its parts. In the process, Wagner discarded elements of opera's internal architecture and eliminated recitative, arias, and set pieces. The theoretic result became a continuous flow of melody, "unendliche melodie," or endless melody.

Nevertheless, Verdi opposed the Wagnerian ideal. He believed that Wagner's use of leitmotifs, those leading motives or fragmented musical tunes associated with characters and ideas, were developed to the extreme. He had used leitmotifs as early as *Ernani* and *Macbeth*, although sparingly and with subtlety. And he considered that Wagner's symphonic weaving of those leitmotifs had created an orchestra that became too garish and heavy, a narrator and commentator in the overall structure that seemingly dominated rather than integrated the drama. Verdi commented, "Opera is opera, symphony is symphony."

Verdi envisioned his own conception of an Italian *music of the future*, a more integrated music drama that would be less complex than those of Wagner. Verdi would strive for musico-dramatic integrity but would remain the conservator of the Italian traditions in which voice and melody were its ultimate components.

Verdi considered Wagner's music dramas dramatically stagnant, their texts too long, overburdened with thought, meditative and introspective, and their declaimed harangues seemingly like blustering speech rather than lyricism. In particular, Verdi always strove for motion, swift action, and counter-reaction. His characters vented impassioned and intense emotions, but in the process, always sang beautiful music. Verdi wrote melodrama. Most of his operas depict great raw emotions, such as love, hate, revenge, and lust for power, but are always set to unforgettable music.

Verdi vehemently opposed the Wagnerian revolution. Nevertheless, their differences became a nineteenth-century clash of operatic titans. Wagner was the radical inventor and innovator; Verdi was the conservator of traditions.

So, in the 1870s, as Verdi approached the composition of *Aida*, Wagner's revolutionary theories loomed as an ominous shadow over Verdi. Nevertheless, he was determined that his *Aida* would maintain its Italian soul. *Aida* would be an Italian opera to the core, expressing its drama with rich melodies and profound vocalism. As such, in *Aida*, Verdi employed many set pieces, such as arias and duets, molding them ingeniously and infusing them with profound dramatic significance. By the time Verdi composed *Aida*, he had achieved absolute mastery of both the musical and theatrical element of his art.

Recitative, which generally moves the plot forward and provides narrative, was the primary innovation of the seventeenth-century Camerata. It provided the action between set pieces that provided moments of meditation and introspection. It is indeed ironic that for 400 years, every reform movement and major innovation in opera has attempted to eliminate formal recitative. As early as *Rigoletto* (1851), Verdi began to bridge the gulf between those seemingly empty passages of recitative and set pieces. By the time Verdi had progressed to *Aida*, he had virtually eliminated formal recitative. As a result, *Aida* is virtually seamless, its entire score containing a definite and continuous flow of music and drama.

In *Aida*, Verdi demonstrated a new maturity in his rhythmic techniques. They had become broader and more appropriate, and certainly represented a complete abandonment of those elementary dance rhythm accompaniments that were so prominent in operas such as *Il Trovatore* (1853).

Aida provides a breathtaking succession of immortal melodies, all fresh, original, and diversified in character. Verdi had never been to Egypt, but harmonically, he captures an Oriental warmth and color in the score as he paints an exotic canvas of rich and expressive musical imagery. In particular, the musical depiction of the Nile in Act III conveys images of the river's serpentine coiling with its ebbs and swells.

Aida provides a heretofore unknown dramatic expressiveness through a magnificent blend of text, music, harmony, and orchestration, and succeeds in achieving an ideal musico-dramatic cohesiveness. Nevertheless, the score always adheres to the central dynamic of Italian opera: a profound lyricism.

Temperamentally, Verdi was a son of the Enlightenment. He was an idealist who possessed a noble conception of humanity that abominated absolute power and deified civil liberty. His lifelong manifesto became a passionate crusade against every form of tyranny, whether social, political, or ecclesiastical.

In 1867, Verdi's opera immediately preceding *Aida*, *Don Carlos*, premiered in Paris. The opera libretto was based on a work of one of Verdi's favorite dramatists, Friedrich Schiller, also the literary source of his previous operas *Giovanna d'Arco*, *I Masnadieri*, and *Luisa Miller*.

In *Don Carlos*, neither Verdi nor Schiller was intending to rewrite history, but rather, to clothe this theme of inhumanity and injustice in a great work of art. The story portrays the inhumanity of Spain's sixteenth-century King Philip II and the stifling power of his monarchy and the Church. Verdi and Schiller's underlying premise was to expound their nineteenth-century humanistic ideals about the dignity of man, freedom, and liberty. Verdi believed that the duty of an artist was equal to that of a priest: to teach morality, and to awaken man to moral consciousness and universal truth. He was a skeptic, and in the nineteenth century's eruption of romantic nationalism, he intuitively foresaw elements of modern fascism and totalitarianism and their consequential abusive authoritarianism. Those

same themes were addressed in his previous operas *Simon Boccanegra* and *Un Ballo in Maschera* (1859)—and, of course, would be addressed later in *Aida*.

In his teens, the young Verdi became immersed in and profoundly admired the literary works of Vittorio Alfieri. Alfieri's tragedy *Filippo* was the story of the sixteenth-century King Philip II of Spain, his son Don Carlos, and the dilemma of Elizabeth de Valois, initially engaged to Don Carlos, but later married to Philip. Alfieri was a freethinking liberal who continuously struggled over the underlying issues affecting Italy's pre-*Risorgimento* nationalist ambitions. He believed that Italian liberation from foreign tyranny had been confounded by the abuses inherent in the political coalition of church and state. His advocacy of freedom earned him heroic status among republicans who wished to overthrow Italy's autocratic foreign rulers, France and Austria.

In *Filippo*, Alfieri passionately assailed tyranny by condemning the "ancient cult of fear" that haunted every tyrant's court. In describing the despotism of Philip II of Spain, he wrote: "The palace is his temple; the tyrant is a god there; courtiers are its priests; and the victims are freedom, honesty, right thinking, virtue, true honor, and finally, ourselves; we are immolated here."

Verdi shared Alfieri's philosophical and political ideas, eventually developing them into a passionate, lifelong antipathy of authoritarianism. As a result, he became an ardent republican and a radical anti-cleric. Later in life Verdi honored Alfieri by naming his son and daughter, respectively, Icilio Romano and Virginia after the heroic protagonists in Alfieri's tragedy *Virginia*.

Verdi's *Don Carlos* has become recognized in recent years as one of his greatest masterpieces. The characters in the opera are embroiled in towering and passionate human dilemmas, but underlying those conflicts and tensions are the noble ideals and sentiments of liberalism. The King and the Grand Inquisitor portray the rigidity and intransigence of sixteenth-century fundamentalism and conservatism, but opposing them are those nineteenth-century-style liberals for human progress represented by Rodrigo, the Marquis of Posa, and eventually the Infante, Don Carlos himself, as they advocate independence for Flanders.

In the *Don Carlos* story, Spain is a theocracy in which secular and religious power are fused, and the authoritarian power of the king is sanctified and justified by the Catholic Church. Political corruption and human abuse become the ultimate consequence of this alliance, leading to excessive power which inherently calls for political responsibility and sacrifice, all arbitrarily justified as necessary for the greater good. In *Don Carlos*, it is that unrelenting authoritarian power of church and state that ultimately intimidates humanity. Its consequences are human repression, helplessness, and impotency.

Man's helplessness against the power of the theocratic state was Verdi's mind-set when in the 1870s he approached his next opera, *Aida*. In the *Aida* story, ancient Egypt's religious and secular power are united in a singular, awesome, sacred institution. In this classical theocracy, church and state are united, and absolute rule is exercised by one man whose power is divinely endowed. The king, or Pharaoh, is an incarnation of god on earth, the supreme ruler and descendant of the divine and cosmic gods. The priests of Isis, just

like the Grand Inquisitor and the church in *Don Carlos*, invoke, protect, and justify the sacred unity of god and the state.

In *Aida*, the victims of authoritarianism are Radames and Aida, their love doomed by their duty to god and country. *Aida* is a human and political drama in which its principal characters become helpless and powerless, impotent to resist the awesome demands of state and religion. As in *Don Carlos*, in *Aida* Verdi was moralizing his fears about the use and abuse of power and its consequential, horrible effects on humanity.

In 1871, Verdi was 58 years old. He had composed 25 successful operas, and his ideological mission and agenda for the liberation and unification of Italy was a *fait accompli*. Even though he opposed the opera world gravitating toward the revolutionary musico-dramatic ideas of Richard Wagner, and he was disheartened with the esthetic state of Italian opera, he was tired and ostensibly unwilling to fight another battle. He yearned for and welcomed the relief of retirement. Nevertheless, when he was presented with the *Aida* story, he was overwhelmed with excitement; his passions overcame reason, and his retirement was temporarily postponed.

In the 1870s, the East had a particular fascination for Europeans who were gaining influence in the Arab world through their colonial adventures, trade, and commerce. In addition, Egyptologists' discoveries, such as Schliemann's uncovering of Troy and the sphinxes, were arousing curiosities as well as a European appetite for exoticism.

At the time, Egypt was part of the Ottoman Empire. Its Khedive, Ishmail Pasha, was the first of three viceroys appointed to Egypt by the Ottoman Sultans in Constantinople. Khedive Ishmail was notoriously irresponsible and profligate, his big spending running up an enormous Egyptian national debt that was mostly owed to the Europeans. In fact, it was specifically because of his wanton spending that eight years later he was relieved of his position and sent back to Istanbul.

The Khedive's great achievements were the openings of the Suez Canal in 1868 and the Cairo Opera three years later in 1871. During the Khedive's rule, he tried to make Cairo the Paris of the East. As he impressed the world with Egypt's modernization, the by-product was that he would be able to attract more creditors from Europe. But his personal mission was to appear before the civilized world as a munificent patron of the arts, so his obsessive desire was to celebrate his new Cairo Opera with a singular and spectacular work based on an Egyptian story. (The Cairo Opera actually opened with *Rigoletto*; *Aida* eventually premiered at the new Cairo Opera in December 1871.)

The Khedive wanted his new opera to be composed by the man he considered the world's greatest reigning opera composer: Giuseppe Verdi. Initially, Verdi was disinclined to accept the offer, and consequently named a huge price that he thought would serve to frighten the Khedive. Surprisingly to Verdi, the Khedive quickly accepted his counteroffer.

Nevertheless, the wily Khedive used a more powerful weapon to induce Verdi. He threatened that if Verdi refused, he would seek out one of his renowned contemporaries, either Gounod or Wagner. Verdi immediately yielded, put aside his retirement plans, and began to compose the opera for the Khedive.

Verdi was a close friend of Camille du Locle, the impresario and director of the Paris Opéra-Comique Theatre who had earlier assisted him in the revision of the librettos for *La Forza del Destino* and *Don Carlos*. Later, in 1875, he was the librettist for Bizet's *Carmen* and the director of the Opéra-Comique at the time of its bankruptcy, which in speculation, was partly due to *Carmen*'s initial failure.

Urged by the Khedive, du Locle presented Verdi with a four-page synopsis of an opera plot based on an Egyptian subject. The story was allegedly authentic, and supposedly written by the Khedive himself. In fact, the plot was actually written by another conspirator, the Egyptologist Auguste Mariette, later honored as Mariette Bey. Mariette was a well-known cataloguer and Egyptologist at the Louvre, and an archeologist who had uncovered sphinxes and other important ancient relics in the Egyptian sands. During his studies, he had actually discovered a story from ancient Egyptian history that he developed into the *Aida* story.

Mariette Bey's spectacular story succeeded in stirring up Verdi's creative fires. Upon seeing the sketch, Verdi could scarcely hold his excitement, believing that behind the story was the hand of an expert. In addition, his interest and enthusiasm were stimulated by the opportunity to create exotic musical coloring and effects offered by a story located in ancient Egypt.

Du Locle and Verdi himself collaborated and became the librettists for the new opera. Verdi demanded complete control over the libretto and selected Antonio Ghislanzoni, who had helped him with the revisions of *La Forza del Destino* and *Don Carlos*, to versify the scenario, as well as translate their libretto from its original French into Italian.

Aida took Verdi only five months to compose. He did not go to Cairo for the premiere – he dreaded the idea of seasickness during a winter voyage. The original plan was to produce the opera toward the close of 1870, but the Franco-Prussian war erupted, and the scenery, painted in Paris, became a prisoner of war. The opera finally premiered in Cairo in December 1871, and in February 1872 at La Scala, Milan.

The success of *Aida* was resounding. A chorus of praise rang out throughout Europe, and Verdi's genius was again acclaimed in glowing terms. He had decisively added another magnificent jewel to his operatic crown.

Aida is grand opera, a genre of operatic performance that reached its pinnacle during the first half of the nineteenth century in France. Grand opera's precursors were those earlier imposing operatic spectacles of Rameau and Gluck, as well as those of Italian expatriates composing in France, Luigi Cherubini and Gasparo Spontini. But it was a Frenchman, Daniel-Francois-Esprit Auber, who in 1828 composed one of the earliest and quintessential grand operas, *La Muette de Portici* ("The Mute Girl of Portici"), a spectacle which may have stimulated Rossini, the Italian master of *opera buffa* and *bel canto*, to compose his final work, the grand opera *William Tell* (1829).

In grand opera, all the components of the art form are enlarged and magnified into spectacle. The opera stage becomes filled with complex scenery, large casts and choruses costumed elaborately, vastly expanded orchestras, and sumptuous ballets. Conceptually, grand opera is concerned specifically with awe and spectacle. In those early grand operas, the musico-dramatic ideals that consumed opera's Camerata founders and its later reformers became secondary considerations.

The principal apostle of nineteenth-century grand opera was the German-born composer Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791-1864). Meyerbeer's grand operas utilized every resource available; a gigantic orchestra, almost every style of singing, huge stages filled with dazzling marches and pageantry, and extravagant ballets. (It was "The Ballet of the Nuns" in Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (1831) that would signal the beginning of the Romantic era in ballet.)

Meyerbeer's operas were concerned with opulence and extravaganza rather than with musico-dramatic ideals. In today's retrospective, his melodies are considered short-winded and his musical and dramatical situations rarely insightful. One uncomplimentary critic once observed, "The inflated form leads to inflated music." Wagner, an enemy of Meyerbeer both personally and professionally, bombastically noted that his spectacles were "effects without causes." Nevertheless, Meyerbeer's works dominated the opera stage for more than 50 years, and in their time, all were sensational successes. In addition to *Robert le Diable*, his most popular operas were *Les Huguenots* (1836), *Le Prophète* (1849), and the posthumously staged *L'Africaine* (1865).

Verdi's *Aida* is a truly majestic grand opera, comparable today only to that of spectacles in another genre, the film epics of Cecil B. De Mille. As grand opera, *Aida* presents a vast panorama of ancient Egypt: exotic oriental atmosphere, gigantic and spectacular scenery, pageantry, hundreds of choristers, large crowds of people dressed in exotic costumes, ballets, six outstanding solo singers, offstage bands, and a very large orchestra.

But *Aida* transcends its genre origins; it is far from a superficial drama or spectacle for spectacle's sake. It is a powerful drama about love, duty, and sacrifice set against a background of war, processions, religious ceremonies, trials, and death.

From Verdi's musical pen, *Aida*'s grandeur lies in its perfectly balanced integration of excellent effects *with* causes. Behind all of its grand opera pomp, pageantry, and spectacle, it is an intensely intimate and human drama.

As Verdi's career evolved, his characterizations became bolder, more passionate, and contained more dramatic and psychological depth. Shakespeare introduced characters who at first seem to be larger than life, but in the end, their essence is that they are profoundly human. The true greatness of Verdi's *Aida* is that its characters are, like those of Shakespeare, intensely and intimately human.

Aida's four principal characters, Aida, Radames, Amneris, and Amonasro, face the tensions and conflicts between love, honor, duty, and patriotism. In their dilemmas and crises, they erupt into towering and volcanic eruptions of human emotions and passions.

The themes in *Aida*'s prelude perfectly capture the opera's profound human conflict. At first, softly played strings introduce a tender chromatic theme that identifies the opera's heroine, Aida. In immediate contrast, the rigid, descending theme associated with the priests is heard. But afterwards, these contrasting themes clash and collide, just as all the individuals in the story clash, collide, and become impregnated with conflict as they confront the power of the state. (For the La Scala premiere of *Aida* in 1872, Verdi revised the prelude, adding Amneris's jealousy theme to its two other themes. This version is rarely performed today.)

The grandeur of *Aida* lies in its perfectly balanced integration of these complex human conflicts. Each character in this human and political drama becomes helpless and powerless, impotent to resist the awesome demands of state and religion. In *Aida*, Verdi found another platform to moralize his fears about the use and abuse of power, and its consequential horrible effects on humanity.

As the opera's protagonists face their dilemmas, they explode into towering and volcanic eruptions of passions. On the surface, they are seemingly stock figures reminiscent of characters from myth, legend, or ancient history, but Verdi makes these characters positively human, skillfully painting their complex and intense inner feelings and emotions. As opera's quintessential dramatist, he presents humanity truthfully; in the end, *Aida* is a very human drama about love and the yearning for love within the human heart.

Radames is both warrior and Aida's lover, so his music is bold as well as romantic. In his opening *romanza*, "Celeste Aida" ("Heavenly Aida"), Verdi's musical language alternates from the dreamy, rapturous, and sentimental to the heroic.

Aida's chromatic identifying theme, first heard in the prelude, is exquisitely simple, tender, and loving. But Aida's dramatic conflict leaves her in continuing despair. She faces the ultimate conflict of love vs. duty, so she prays often, always pleading for pity, mercy, relief, and reconciliation, as in her poignant prayer, "Numi pietà" ("Gods! Have mercy on my suffering!").

The opening of Act III is a magnificent mood picture. Aida awaits Radames for what she believes to be their final farewell. She senses doom, and even considers casting herself into the Nile. Verdi's undulating and coiling music is synonymous with her sensibilities and aptly describes her inner turmoil. But afterwards, in perhaps the finest example of a true aria that contains eloquent expressive power, pure and beautiful melody, perfect form, and subtle harmonies, Aida pours out her tragic soul in "O patria mia" ("Oh my country").

A trademark of Verdi's *Aida* score is how quickly and suddenly passions are inflamed and ignited. In the opening scene, after Amneris notices that Radames has cast loving glances at Aida, their calm conversation suddenly erupts into an

explosion of Amneris's anger and jealousy. But Radames fears that he may have betrayed their secret, and Aida senses her tragic conflict. Verdi's underlying music for this trio is twisted, as well as tense, conflicting, and explosive.

Another example of extroverted passions occurs in the confrontation in Act III between father and daughter, Amonasro and Aida. At first, Amonasro evokes the images of Ethiopia's green landscapes to persuade Aida to confront her duty: "Rivedrai le foreste imbalsamate" ("You will again see our balmy forests"), or "Pensa che un popolo, vinto, straziato" ("Think of the people, defeated, torn"). But their confrontation explodes when Aida refuses, and Amonasro bursts into a condemnation of his daughter: "Non sei mia figlia! Dei Faraoni tu sei la schiava!" ("You are not my daughter! You are a slave of the Pharaohs!") This is a supreme moment of gigantic Verdian passions.

Amneris is an exciting multidimensional character in the drama, musically and textually sculpted in depth. Her mood varies from loving and sensuous to imperious, to explosions of anger, jealousy, and terror. After her attendants' chorus opens Act II, she expresses her sensuous longing for Radames's return: "Ah vieni!" ("Oh come!")

Amneris is a woman obsessed and possessed with her love for Radames, and she is determined to rid herself of Aida, her rival for his love. The Act II confrontation between Aida and Amneris is a marvel of Verdi's striving toward his own unique musico-dramatic ideal, a profound dramatic synthesis and fusion of text and music. For this scene, Verdi battled for every word and every detail in order to achieve dramatic emphasis. He became obsessed with what he called the *parola scenica*, literally, "the dramatic word." These are powerful words, words that could almost stand alone without musical underscoring, and words which perfectly express the situation; however, when these words are fused with the music, they add explosive immediacy to the action, and a shuddering clarity and vividness to the dramatic structure.

In this powerful showdown between two princesses, Amneris is at first inquisitorial, devious, and cunning, using every tool in her arsenal to learn the truth. Is Aida having a secret love affair with Radames? She assures Aida, now distressed and in a state of hopelessness after hearing of the Ethiopians' defeat: "Time will heal the anguish in your heart, and more than time, a powerful god—love." The word love elicits its effect: Aida turns pale and trembles while Amneris senses victory, becoming more determined than ever to discover the truth.

She weakens Aida's defenses through cajolery and makes her betray her secret lover, using the pretence of sisterly love and good will as her weapon. And then Amneris delivers her final coup, that Radames was killed in battle. Amneris is unable even to finish her sentence when Aida convulsively erupts. Amneris then gloats in her triumph: "Tremble! I read the secret in your heart! You love him!"

In this incredibly powerful confrontation scene, Verdi abandoned his librettist's polished verses and substituted violent prose, nothing more explosive than Amneris's conclusion: "Do you understand? I am your rival, a daughter of the Pharaohs!" And finally, Amneris curses Aida. In vain, Aida can only plead for mercy and pity.

Similarly, the Act IV confrontation between Amneris and Radames contains *Aida*'s trademark explosions and eruptions of passions. Almost lawyerly, Amneris pleads with Radames to be objective and allow reason to conquer his emotions. If he gives up *Aida*, Amneris will use her power to save his life.

Amneris is a woman whose heart beats desperately and ardently for Radames's love. As she tries to reason with him, his intransigence inflames her: Verdi marked his score, "con agitazione, animando, con espressione" ("with agitation, animated, and with expression"). Amneris declares: "Ti scolpa e la tua grazia io pregherò dal trono, e nunzia di perdono, si vita, a te sarò." ("Exculpate yourself and I will pray for grace from the throne, and I will be a messenger of pardon and life for you.") The emotive power of Verdi's music reveals her desperate soul. But Radames is indifferent and unsympathetic, and Amneris realizes that she has lost Radames to *Aida*.

The split stage configuration in the final scene of *Aida* was Verdi's own idea. Below, Radames despairs in his sealed tomb, and above, in the temple, Amneris sobs on the stone that has been sealed.

In ancient Egypt, life on earth was closely tied to death; earthly life was only a passage to the afterlife, and heaven was a blessed welcome. Verdi's soft, almost transcendent musical language portrays that spiritual ideal. He consciously strove to portray *Aida*'s final moments as a mellow farewell to life on earth—serene, simple, and poignant.

Aida has hidden herself in the crypt in order to die with Radames. With peaceful resignation, suggesting that Radames and *Aida* are speeding to celestial havens, the two lovers bid farewell to earth. Verdi's music provides images of the final consummation of their love through an ironical quietness that fails to express the cruelty of their fate.

Offstage the priestesses chant their prayer "Immenso Fthà" ("All-powerful Phthà") almost in a whisper. In the temple above the crypt, Amneris, in breathless phrases, prays for peace for Radames's soul. It is an irony of this drama that in its final moments, Amneris, who remains outside the crypt that has sealed the fate of the man she loves, does not know, nor will ever know, that her rival was by birth not a slave, but a princess like herself, who will be dying with the man she loves.

In *The Magic Mountain*, Thomas Mann commented on the final moments of *Aida* when Radames discovers that *Aida* has hidden in the tomb to die with him:

"You in this tomb," comes the inexpressibly moving, sweet and at the same time, heroic voice of Radames, in mingled horror and rapture. Yes, she has found her way to him, the beloved one for whose sake he has forfeited life and honor, she has awaited him here, to die with him; the intoxication of final union. The repentant Amneris is in the temple praying for Radames's soul.

Aida has been referred to as a necklace of musically fine jewels, so rich in melody and harmony, its music so closely wedded in its expressive power to the meaning of the text, and so broadly dramatic in all of its aspects, that it claims a place among the most phenomenal artistic creations of the second millennium. *Aida* is without doubt a true operatic masterpiece.

Within *Aida*'s panorama of war, processions, ceremonies, trials, and death, the opera presents the pulsing life of human beings. It is most of all an opera story about human passions.

Aida became Verdi's declaration that Italian opera and its focus on melody and voice remained supreme. With *Aida*, Verdi rejuvenated and even revolutionized Italian opera. The throbbing passions which explode throughout the entire *Aida* story certainly influenced the next generation of Italian *verismo* opera composers, represented by Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1890), Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci* (1892), and certainly by Puccini, who, as a young man, was determined to become an opera composer after he saw *Aida*.

Aida again revealed the extraordinary powers that Verdi had within his musical arsenal, but in this opera, they are revealed with renewed purpose. The grand old man of Italian opera had given the world a masterpiece in *Aida*, an opera that in every conceivable respect transcends the best works of his predecessors Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini. It is a work with opulent musical color, gorgeous orchestral instrumentation, and melodic splendor and beauty in every musical measure.

The only Italian opera composer who has rivaled *Aida* is Verdi himself, who would resurface 15 years later with perhaps the ultimate music drama, *Otello*, and later with *Falstaff*—the great Italian master's reconciliation with the evolution of the operatic art form; the Italian *music of the future*.

In *Aida*, Verdi ennobled powerful, towering, and intense human emotions and passions as each character faces conflicts of love, honor, and duty. *Aida*'s passions are timeless and ageless, perhaps the secret of its magical and eternal youth.

Verdi himself would have the last word about his *Aida*. He was amazed at his incredible creation, and commented: "*Aida* is certainly not one of my worst operas...."

Principal Characters in AIDA

Radames, an Egyptian military hero in love with Aida	Tenor
Aida, a captured Ethiopian slave, maidservant to the Egyptian princess Amneris	Soprano
Amneris, the daughter of the Pharaoh and princess of Egypt	Mezzo-soprano
Amonasro, the Ethiopian king and Aida's father	Baritone
Ramphis, the high priest of Isis	Bass
Pharaoh, the king of Egypt	Bass
A Messenger	Tenor

TIME: Ancient Egypt during the time of the Pharaohs

PLACE: The cities of Memphis and Thebes

Brief Story Synopsis

Aida is a story about love that conflicts with patriotic duty. Radames, an Egyptian general, and Aida, a captured Ethiopian princess whose identity has been concealed, are secretly in love. Aida is the maidservant to Amneris, the daughter of the Pharaoh and princess of Egypt, who also loves Radames.

The Ethiopians and their king, Amonasro, Aida's father, are advancing on Thebes. To meet their attack, Radames has been chosen to lead the Egyptian armies. Aida is in conflict. The man she loves commands the Egyptian troops who are at war against her countrymen.

Amneris, suspicious that Aida is her rival for Radames, tricks her into revealing that Radames is indeed her lover. Now fuming with jealousy, Amneris swears revenge against her rival.

Radames returns triumphantly from his battle against the Ethiopians, and asks for clemency for the prisoners. Among them is their king, Amonasro, who is disguised as an officer. At the sight of him, Aida acknowledges her father's presence, causing astonishment among the multitude. The high priest, Ramphis, warns that if the Ethiopians are freed, they will resurge and seek vengeance. The Pharaoh frees the captives on the condition that Aida and her father remain as hostages. The Pharaoh complicates the rivalry between Aida and Amneris. In appreciation of Radames's victory, he grants Radames the hand of Amneris in marriage; together they shall rule Egypt.

Amonasro induces Aida to heed her patriotic duty and obtain tactical military information from Radames. As Radames and Aida plan to flee Egypt together, Radames unwittingly reveals the route the Egyptian army is planning to pursue. His revelation is overheard by Amonasro who reveals himself as the Ethiopian king. Amneris and Ramphis witness Radames's indiscretion and accuse him of treachery; he surrenders to justice.

Amneris pleads with Radames to abandon his love for Aida, and in return, she will secure a pardon for him from the Pharaoh, but Radames refuses her offer. At Radames's trial, he is found guilty and condemned to die in a tomb. In a crypt, Aida joins Radames, and both await their imminent death as Amneris, above them in the temple, mourns the death of her beloved.

As the *Aida* story progresses, towering passions and emotional eruptions are unleashed by the principal characters as they face conflicts of love, jealousy, rivalry, and patriotism. The ultimate tragedy of the story is that as Aida and Radames are forced to yield to the power of state and religion, both become doomed.

Story Narrative with Music Highlights

Prelude

The prelude to *Aida* immediately establishes the dramatic conflict within the story: human helplessness against the oppressive power of the state and religion. Two musical themes collide, representing the struggle and tension between love and duty.

The first theme heard is the soft, poignant, pleading melodic motive identifying the heroine, Aida.

Andante mosso



The second theme identifies the priests of Egypt: it is dark, imposing music that suggests their authority and oppressiveness. They are the unrelenting guardians of the glory of their nation.

Andante mosso



Act I - Scene 1:

The Grand Hall in the palace of Pharaoh in the ancient Egyptian city of Memphis

Despite their recent defeat, Egypt's Ethiopian enemies are again advancing and threatening the city of Memphis.

Radames, an officer in the Egyptian army, converses with the high priest, Ramphis, and expresses his eager anticipation and hope to become the supreme commander of their troops. Ramphis advises him that the goddess Isis, the divine benefactress of Egypt, has already named the commander, and the decision will soon be announced by Pharaoh himself.

After Ramphis departs, Radames reveals that he loves the captured Ethiopian slave Aida, now a maidservant to the Egyptian princess, Amneris. Aida has concealed her royal Ethiopian identity to prevent the Egyptians from using her as a political hostage. Radames speculates on the honor and glory he will achieve if he should be selected to command the Egyptian armies and then return victorious. He concludes that with his triumph, Pharaoh would generously grant him his coveted victory prize, his beloved Aida.

Radames sings the *romanza*, "Celeste Aida, forma divina" ("Heavenly Aida, divinely beautiful"), a meditation about his passionate love for Aida, which he concludes with his dream of their future happiness together: "Ergerti un trono vicino al sol" ("I will raise a throne for you near the sun.")

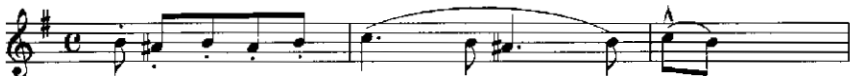
Radames: “Celeste Aida”**Andantino**

Princess Amneris enters, and her subtle, superficial conversation with Radames fails to hide her raging passion for him.

Amneris's theme**Allegro assai moderato**

When Aida suddenly appears, Radames inadvertently casts loving glances at her. Amneris observes them, and becomes inflamed with jealousy. This is the beginning of a bitter rivalry between the two princesses.

Each character reveals his or her inner thoughts. Radames reflects his agitation that Amneris may have discovered his secret love for Aida; Amneris reveals her suspicion and burning jealousy if Aida is indeed Radames's love; and Aida vents her desperation and frustration, believing that not only is her love for Radames doomed and futile, but that she will never again see her beloved country.

Trio: Aida, Radames, and Amneris**Allegro agitato e presto**

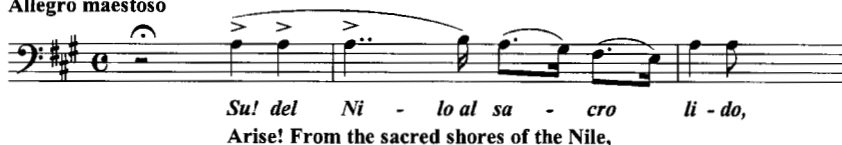
Pharaoh's procession arrives. A messenger delivers grave news telling of an invasion into Egypt by the Ethiopians led by their indomitable king, Amonasro. They have devastated and burned crops and, emboldened by their easy victory, are now marching on Thebes.

Pharaoh proclaims war, and his people approve with emotional outbursts of "Guerra, guerra" ("War, war"). Pharaoh turns to Radames and announces that their venerated goddess, Isis, has chosen him to command their legions against the Ethiopians. Radames thanks the gods for answering his prayers. Amneris responds with pride and elation; Aida trembles in fear.

The Pharaoh commands his people to the temple of Vulcan to anoint Radames with the sacred arms of Egyptian heroes. The priests, ministers, and captains join to praise their powerful gods who will bring them victory and death to the foreign invaders: “Su! del Nilo al sacro lido” (“Arise! From the sacred shores of the Nile”).

Pharaoh and Chorus: “Su! del Nilo al sacro lido”

Allegro maestoso



Amneris proudly presents Radames with a staff to guide him to victory, and as they exit, she leads the Egyptians in proclaiming their ultimate victory: “Ritorna vincitor” (“Return victorious”).

“Ritorna vincitor”

AMNERIS <i>Ri - tor - na vin - ci - tor!</i> Return victorious!	RADAMES, PHARAOH, PRIESTS <i>Ri - tor - na vin - ci - tor!</i> Return victorious!
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The musical score for "Ritorna vincitor" is in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and 2/4 time. It consists of two staves. The first staff is for Amneris and the second staff is for Radames, Pharaoh, and Priests. Both staves begin with a whole rest, followed by a half note D, a quarter note E, a quarter note F#, a half note G, a quarter note A, a quarter note B, a quarter note C, and a half note D. The lyrics are: "Ri - tor - na vin - ci - tor! Return victorious!".

Aida is left alone. She faces inner conflict and is agonized and distressed. She repeats the Egyptian call to victory, “Return victorious,” but for whom does Aida pray? For her lover Radames’s victory or for her country Ethiopia’s triumph in battle? Aida faces the conflict of her love for Radames vs. her loyalty to Ethiopia. Her father, Amonasro, has invaded Ethiopia to rescue her from bondage. If he defeats the Egyptians, her beloved Radames may die. If Radames is victorious, her father may be killed and her country destroyed.

Aida condemns herself for her treacherous thoughts. She has inadvertently wished her lover to return victorious over her father and brothers. Aida bemoans her cruel fate, and concludes the tragic portrait of her inner conflicts with an intense and delicate prayer. She is weary and vulnerable, and despairingly pleads to her gods: “Numi, pietà del mio soffrir!” (“Gods! Have mercy on my suffering!”)

“Numi, pietà”

Cantabile

Nu - mi, pie - tà del mio sof - frir!
Gods! Have mercy on my suffering!

The musical notation is a single staff in treble clef, key of B-flat major (two flats), and common time (C). It begins with a whole note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B-flat4, and a half note C5. A slur covers the next four notes: a half note B-flat4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a half note F4. The lyrics are written below the staff, with the first line in italics and the second line in bold.

Act I - Scene 2: Temple of Vulcan at Memphis

In the temple of Vulcan, the priests and priestesses, in an austere and solemn ceremony, invoke the sacred gods of Egypt with solemn chants and religious hymns.

Invocation of the Priestesses

Andante con moto

Pos - sen - te, possen - te Fthà,
All-powerful, all-powerful Phthà,

The musical notation is a single staff in treble clef, key of B-flat major (two flats), and common time (C). It begins with a whole note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, a quarter note B-flat4, and a half note C5. A slur covers the next four notes: a half note B-flat4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a half note F4. The lyrics are written below the staff, with the first line in italics and the second line in bold.

Radames solemnly expresses his firm devotion to Egypt. He is led to the altar, blessed, anointed by the priests, and then receives the sacred armor and sword. The consecration of Radames conveys the extraordinary power of the gods to protect and defend their sacred soil. They invoke the all-powerful god Phthà, the father of gods and men, their creator, their guardian and protector, the animating spirit of the universe, and the supreme judge of human conduct and destiny.

The finale of the consecration of Radames concludes with a full fortissimo of chorus and orchestra, all glorifying the god Phthà: “Immenso Fthà” (“All-powerful Phthà”).

Act II - Scene 1: Amneris’s apartments

Radames and the Egyptian armies have vanquished the Ethiopians. Amneris is surrounded by female slaves who adorn her for the forthcoming celebration of the Egyptian victory over the Ethiopians. Amneris, with passionate and voluptuous sensuality, rapturously dreams about Radames, and eagerly prepares to welcome him.

Amneris: “Ah! vieni, vieni, amor mio m’inebria”

Cantabile



Ah! Vie - ni, vieni, amor mio m'ineb - ria,
Ah! Come, come my love, intoxicate me,

As Aida approaches, Amneris suspects that this slave of the vanquished Ethiopians may indeed be her rival for Radames's love. A dramatic confrontation ensues between the two princesses. (Aida's identity as a princess of Ethiopia is not known.)

Amneris is determined to solve the mystery and prove that her suspicions are true. She will unmercifully use cunning and guile to trap Aida into admitting her love for Radames. At first, she feigns affection and friendship for Aida, pretending sympathy for the fatal destiny of her people. In response, Aida expresses her anxiety and deep concern for the fate of her father and countrymen. After Amneris offers her pity and assurance that time—and love—will heal her wounds, the mention of love immediately transforms Aida from sadness to hope.

As she proceeds to try to entrap Aida, Amneris tells her that Radames has been killed in battle. Aida's despairing response persuades Amneris that she has indeed uncovered the truth. But then Amneris tricks Aida and contradicts the news, telling her that "Radames vive" ("Radames lives"). Aida now responds with an outburst of joy. Unwittingly, Aida has revealed her secret.

Amneris explodes and screams at her rival: "Sì, tu l'ami. Ma l'amo anch'io intendi tu? Son tua rivale figlia de' Faraoni." ("Yes, you love him. I love him too, do you hear? I am your rival, the daughter of Pharaoh.")

In an almost instinctive defense, Aida is about to betray her identity as a princess of Ethiopia, but she prudently hesitates, and begs Amneris for forgiveness and pity. Amneris, now seething with jealousy and revenge, erupts in rage, shocked that her rival for Radames is but a lowly slave. She then proceeds to malign and curse Aida. Then, with indignation, she condemns Aida: "Trema, vil schiava!" ("Tremble, vile slave!") Amneris's passions of hatred and revenge have erupted and exploded. Aida begs for pity and mercy, realizing that if she reveals her love for Radames, her life is doomed.

Act II - Scene 2: Entrance to the city of Thebes, before the temple of Ammon

The Triumphal Scene of *Aida* provides a magnificent spectacle that portrays pomp, splendor, glory, and the power of ancient Egypt and its Pharaohs. All Egypt has gathered to celebrate victory over the Ethiopians and honor Radames and his troops.

The choral hymn “Gloria all’Egitto” (“Glory to Egypt”) accompanies the entrance of Pharaoh, Amneris, the royal court, and the priests. Troops arrive, accompanied by the exhilarating Grand March. A ballet accompanies the presentation of treasures from the conquered Ethiopians, and then all exuberantly applaud the arrival of Radames, who is duly praised by Pharaoh as the savior of Egypt.

Grand March

Allegro maestoso



Pharaoh salutes Radames, and Amneris places the crown of victory upon his head. Pharaoh, in appreciation for Radames’s triumph, offers him any wish. Radames responds with compassion and generosity, and asks that the captive prisoners be brought forward.

Among the prisoners is Aida’s father, Amonasro, King of Ethiopia, but disguised as an officer. At the sight of him Aida rushes towards him with a cry of “My father!” and embraces him. The multitude replies in astonishment “Her father!,” to which Amneris adds the significant comment “In our power!” Aida and Amonasro embrace, and he whispers to her that she must not betray his true identity.

Amonasro expresses his fierce pride. He fought valiantly, but hostile fate decreed his defeat. With nobility, he explains his honor in fighting for king and country: “Se l’amor della patria è delitto, siamo rei tutti, siamo pronti a morir!” (“If the love of country is a crime, we are all criminals, all ready to die!”)

He then transforms his defiance to a plea for pity, mercy, and clemency, appealing to Pharaoh’s sympathy and understanding by explaining that their positions could have been reversed. Pharaoh himself could have been stricken by fate and become a prisoner: “Ma tu, Re, tu signore possente, a costoro ti volgi clemente; oggi noi siamo percossi dal fato, ma domani voi potria il fato colpir.” (“Today we are struck by fate, but tomorrow fate may strike you.”)

Amonasro: “Ma tu, Re”

Moderato



Ma tu, Re, tu si - gno - re pos - sen-te,
But you, Pharaoh, you powerful lord,

Ramphis and the priests oppose clemency for the Ethiopian prisoners and advise Pharaoh to decree death to them. Radames, after casting loving glances upon Aida, which prompts Amneris to seethe with revenge, reminds Pharaoh of his promise, and asks life and liberty for the Ethiopians.

Ramphis reminds Pharaoh and Radames that the Ethiopians are enemy warriors with revenge in their hearts. A pardon would only embolden them and incite them to arms again. Radames, believing that their warrior king Amonasro was killed in battle, argues that without their leader, no hope remains for the vanquished. Ramphis offers a compromise and suggests that the prisoners be freed, but that in exchange, Aida and her father remain as hostages.

Pharaoh yields to Ramphis's counsel. To celebrate the renewed peace, he bestows on Radames his final reward: the hand of his daughter Amneris in marriage. Both shall now rule Egypt. The power of Pharaoh has doomed Radames's and Aida's love.

Amid this grandiose spectacle, the conflicting dilemmas of each of the characters are placed clearly in focus. Amneris gloats, jubilant that her dreams to possess Radames have been fulfilled, and confident that the slave Aida can no longer be her rival for Radames. Aida is in despair, fully realizing the hopelessness of her love now that Radames has been granted Amneris and the throne of Egypt. Radames is confused and bewildered. Amonasro whispers to Aida to have faith because Ethiopian revenge is imminent. A reprise of the hymn "Gloria all'Egitto," followed by the Grand March, concludes the Triumphal Scene.

Act III: The banks of the Nile

Act III begins in near silence, its music evoking serene Oriental imagery as moonlight descends on the Nile. The priestesses in the temple of Isis sing hymns of joy to celebrate the forthcoming royal wedding of Amneris and Radames. Amneris and the high priest Ramphis arrive to pray at the temple on the eve of her marriage.

Aida appears for a secret rendezvous with Radames. While she waits, she nostalgically recalls her homeland: "O patria mia, mai più, mai più ti rivedrò" ("O my country, I will never, never see you again!"). Then she recalls its natural beauty: "O cieli azurri, o dolci aure native" ("O beautiful blue skies, the native soft air.")

Aida: "O cieli azurri, o dolci aure native"

Andante mosso



O cieli az - zur - ri, o dol - ci au - re na - ti - ve,
O beautiful blue skies, the native soft air,

Aida's father, Amonasro, appears. He warns his daughter that her rival will destroy her. He then tells her that she can have her country, her throne, and Radames as well, if she helps the Ethiopians defeat the Egyptians. Amonasro arouses Aida's patriotism by invoking their homeland, Ethiopia.

Amonasro and Aida: "Rivedrai le foreste imbalsamate"

Allegro giusto



Ri - ve drai le for - es - te imbal - sa - ma - te,
 You will again see our balmy forests,

Amonasro is clever and manipulative. He reminds Aida that the Egyptian enemies have humiliated their people by mercilessly committing atrocities and horrors. They have profaned their homes, temples, and altars, and ravished virgins. He again appeals to Aida's patriotism, advising her that the Ethiopian armies are ready to attack and will be victorious, but only if they know the route the Egyptian armies plan to follow.

Aida inquires, somewhat disingenuously, "Who will be able to discover it? Who?" Amonasro replies, "You alone." He reminds her that Radames, their general, will meet her shortly, and he commands his daughter to secure that strategic information from Radames.

Aida becomes horrified, immediately realizing that in order to perform her patriotic duty, she must betray her lover. Aida refuses Amonasro's demands. In her despair and conflict between love for Radames and her duty to her country, she pleads for her father's pity and understanding. But Amonasro is relentless and responds furiously, insisting that without her help, Ethiopia will be vanquished, and the Egyptians will destroy their cities and spread terror, death, and carnage.

He reminds Aida that if she fails to cooperate, she will bear the guilt for Ethiopia's destruction: "Because of you, your country dies." He then explodes in a rage, cursing his daughter if she does not help her people: "You are not my daughter. You are a slave of the Pharaohs!"

Amonasro has terrorized Aida; her pleas for mercy and understanding have become futile. Although she is appalled at the thought of betraying Radames, she must accede to her duty to father and country. Aida reluctantly consents; she will secure the secret information from Radames.

Radames appears for his rendezvous with Aida.

Radames: "Pur ti riveggo, mia dolce Aida"

Allegro giusto



Pur ti ri - veg - go, mia dol-ce A - i - da,
 To see you again, my sweet Aida,

Aida initially spurns Radames, condemning him as the spouse of Amneris, but Radames contradicts her and swears that his only love is Aida. When Aida asks him how he expects to free himself from Amneris, Radames claims that if he defeats the Ethiopians, Pharaoh will reward him. He will ask for Aida as his prize. But Aida is more realistic and pessimistic, and advises him that his dreams are in vain. Amneris will not be spurned, and she will be relentless in her revenge.

Aida persuades Radames that they must flee together and escape the vengeance of Amneris and the priests. She seductively describes the blissful life they could share together in Ethiopia.

Aida: “Là tra foreste vergini”

Andantino



Là tra fo-re - ste ver - gi - ni, di fio - ri pro - fu - ma - te,
There..among the virgin forests and fragrant flowers,

When Radames hesitates, Aida renounces him, and tells him to go to Amneris: if he will not flee with Aida, he no longer loves her. Radames refuses violently, but fearing he will lose Aida, with impassioned resolution he capitulates and decides that he will flee Egypt with her.

Aida asks Radames by which road they can escape. Radames assures her that the gorges of Napata will be safe until tomorrow; it is then that the Egyptian armies plan to ambush the Ethiopians at the gorges.

Upon hearing Radames divulge his secret, Amonasro emerges from hiding and announces that he is not only Aida's father, but the king of the Ethiopians who was presumed dead. Radames is frozen in shock, delirious, and horrified. He fully realizes that he has unwittingly betrayed Egypt. Amonasro, now in possession of strategic military intelligence, triumphantly announces that his troops will be at the Napata gorges, and they will ambush the Egyptians.

Aida tries to calm Radames, assuring him that her love is more important than his honor, but Radames is inconsolable and deliriously screams that he has been dishonored.

Amneris and Ramphis had overheard Radames's revelation as they exited the temple and accuse him of treachery. Amonasro tries to kill Amneris, but Radames intervenes and deters him. Afterwards, Amonasro and Aida flee.

Guards appear. Radames, gasping in confusion and disbelief, cries out, "I am dishonored," and then surrenders himself to justice and the priests.

Act IV - Scene 1: The judgment hall

Amneris is overwhelmed with anger, grief, remorse, and desperation. She laments that her abhorred rival, Aida, has escaped, but more importantly, she fears that her beloved Radames will be condemned to death by the priests as a traitor. Amneris is inflamed with her love for Radames, and decides that if he renounces Aida, she will use her power to save him and persuade Pharaoh to grant him a pardon. Confidently, Amneris calls for Radames to plead with him.

Amneris tries to reason with Radames, but he has reconciled himself to his guilt. He indeed revealed a vital secret, but his honor remains pure, because his treasonous revelation was unwitting and unintentional.

Radames believes that Aida is dead. Without her, he has no interest in salvation and craves death. But then Amneris reveals the truth, telling him that Aida lives. It is her father Amonasro who is dead. Amneris, a woman obsessed and possessed by her love for Radames, pleads with him to give up Aida; marriage to Amneris will save his life. She tells him, “Ah! You must live! Yes, you will live for my love. I have undergone dreadful anguish in my love for you. I loved you and suffered much.”

But Amneris cannot tear Radames from his passion for Aida. Just like Amneris’s passion for Radames, it is a love that is eternal and unshakable. Radames’s obstinate refusals inflame the frustrated and defeated Amneris. Her initial dignity and restraint become transformed into turbulent explosions of renewed jealousy and anger.

Radames, intransigent and oblivious of her passionate entreaties, is led off to his trial.

Offstage, the priests read the charges against Radames, each charge echoed by solemn timpani rolls and trumpet blasts. Radames revealed his country’s secrets to the enemy, deserted his camp on the day before battle, and broke his faith in country, king, and honor. Radames remains silent, and refuses to defend himself against the charges. Finally, the priests pronounce Radames a traitor, and condemn him to be entombed alive.

Listening outside, Amneris wails in anguish with outcries to the gods for mercy. When the priests appear, she frantically confronts them and unleashes her bitterness, cursing them as merciless ministers of death.

Finally, Amneris damns the priests with ruthless vengeance: “Empia razza! Anatéma su voi! La vendetta del ciel scenderà! Anatéma su voi!” (“Impious race! A curse on you! Let heaven’s vengeance fall on you! A curse on you!”)

Act IV - Scene 2: A split stage: the upper level the temple of Vulcan, the lower level a subterranean crypt

The fatal stone is placed on Radames's tomb as he mourns his fate. He shall never again see the light of day or his beloved Aida.

Suddenly, Aida appears, explaining that she has come to die with her beloved Radames. Together, they will rise to heaven, immortalize their love, and achieve eternal bliss.

From the temple of Vulcan above, the chants of the priestesses are heard: their fatal hymn of death. Together, Aida and Radames invoke their farewell to life on earth. Their dreams of terrestrial joy have vanished in grief, but happiness overcomes them as they invoke heaven's promise of eternity for their souls.

Radames and Aida: "O terra addio"

Meno mosso



O terra ad - di - o, addi - o val - le di pian - ti,
Farewell earth, farewell valleys of tears,

Amneris, in mourning robes, appears before the stone which closes Radames's crypt. She pronounces her final words to her beloved Radames: "Pace t'imploro, pace t'imploro, pace, pace, pace!" ("I pray for peace for you, I pray for peace for you, peace, peace, peace!")

AIDA

Libretto

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ACT I

Prelude: Aida's theme**Andante mosso****Prelude: Priest's theme****Andante mosso**

SCENE 1: A Grand Hall in the Palace of Pharaoh in the ancient Egyptian city of Memphis. The scene is dominated by large colonnades and statues of the gods; in the background, the temples and palaces of Memphis and the pyramids.

(Radames converses with Ramphis, the High Priest)

Ramfis:

Sì: corre voce che l'Etiopie ardisca sfidarci ancora, e del Nilo la valle e tebe minacciar. Fra breve un messo recherà il ver.

Ramphis:

Yes, there is a report that the Ethiopians dare defy us, and threaten the Nile valley and Thebes. Soon a messenger will bring news.

Radames:

La sacra Iside consultasti?

Radames:

Did you consult the sacred Isis?

Ramfis:

Ella ha nomato dell'Egizie falangi il condottier supremo.

Ramphis:

She has named the supreme leader of the Egyptian troops.

Radames:

Oh lui felice!

Radames:

Oh! What a fortunate man!

Ramfis:

Giovane e prode è desso. Ora del Nume reco i decreti al Re.

Ramphis:

He is young and brave. Now I go to the Pharaoh to convey the decrees of the goddess.

(Ramphis exits)

Radames:

Se quel guerrier io fossi!
Se il mio sogno s'avverasse!
Un esercito di prodi da me guidato

Radames:

If I could be chosen that warrior,
my dream would be fulfilled:
a proud army led to victory by me,

e la vittoria... e il plauso di Menfi tutta!
E a te, mia dolce Aida, tornar di lauri cinto,
dirti: per te ho pugnato,
per te ho vinto!

and the applause of all Memphis.
And to return to you, my gentle Aida,
crowned with laurels, to tell you that I have
fought and been victorious for you!

Andantino



Celeste Aida, forma divina.
Mistico serto di luce e fior,
del mio pensiero tu sei regina,
tu di mia vita sei lo splendor.
Il tuo bel cielo vorrei ridarti,
le dolci brezze del patria suol;
un regal serto sul crin posarti,
ergerti un trono vicino al sol, ah!

Heavenly Aida, divinely beautiful.
Mystical vision of flower and sunlight,
you reign over my thoughts;
you are the splendor of my life.
I would restore you to your bright skies,
and the soft breezes of your native soil;
I would place a regal crown on you,
raise a throne for you near the sun, ah!

Celeste Aida, forma divina,
Mistico raggio di luce e fior.....

Heavenly Aida, divinely beautiful.
Mystical vision of flower and sunlight...

(Amneris enters)

Allegro assai moderato



Amneris:

Quale insolita gioia nel tuo sguardo!
Di quale nobil ferezza ti balena il volto!
Degna d'invidia, quanto saria la donna il cui
bramato aspetto tanta luce di gaudio in te
destasse!

Amneris:

What unusual joy in your glance!
What noble pride glows in your face!
Would I be the woman for whose love you
are yearning, and has awakened you to
light and happiness!

Radames:

D'un sogno avventuroso si beava il mio
cuore.
Oggi, la Diva proferse il nome del guerrier
che al campo le schiere egizie condurrà.
Ah! s'io fossi a tal onor prescelto.

Radames:

I had an adventurous dream that was
stirring my heart.
Today, the goddess will declare the name
of the warrior who shall lead the Egyptians.
Ah! If I was selected for such an honor.

Amneris:

Nè un altro sogno mai più gentil, più soave,
al core ti parlo?

Non hai tu in Menfi desideri...speranze?

Radames:

Io! (Quale inchiesta!)

(Forse l'arcano amore scoprì che m'arde
in core della tua schiava il nome mi lesse
nel pensier!)

Amneris:

(Oh guai! Se un altro amore ardesse a lui
nel core!)

Radames:

(Della sua schiava il nome mi lesse nel
pensier!)

Amneris:

(Guai se il mio sguardo penetra questo fatal
mister!)

Radames:

(Forse mi lesse nel pensier!)

Radames:

Dessa!

Amneris:

(Ei si turba... e quale sguardo rivolse a lei!
Aida!... a me rivale forse saria costei?)

Vieni, o diletta, appresati,
schiava non sei nè ancella, qui, dove in
dolce fascino io ti chiamai sorella.
Piangi? Delle tue lacrime svela il segreto a
me.

Aida:

Ohimè! di guerra fremere l'atroce grido io
sento. Per l'infelice patria, per me per voi pavento.

Amneris:

Favelli il ver?

Amneris:

Is there another dream, more gentle, more
sweet, speaking in your heart?

Have you dreams and hopes in Memphis?

Radames:

I! (What a question!)

(Perhaps she has discovered the secret
love in my heart, and reads that her slave's
name is in my thoughts!)

Amneris:

(Oh! Woe if another love burns in his
heart!)

Radames:

(Does she read her slave's name in my
thoughts?)

Amneris:

(Woe, if my could penetrate this fatal
mystery!)

Radames:

(Perhaps she reads my thoughts!)

(Aida enters)

Radames:

It is her!

Amneris:

(He is moved...and what a look he gives
her! Aida! Is she my rival for him?)

(turning to Aida)

Come, dearest friend, come near to me,
I no longer call you slave; here with gentle
affection I call you my sister.

You weep? Tell me the secret behind your
tears.

Aida:

Alas! I hear the atrocious shouts of vicious
battle. I tremble for my unhappy homeland.

Amneris:

Do you speak the truth?

N'e s'agita più grave cura in te?
(Trema, o rea schiava!)

There is nothing more grave in your heart?
(Tremble, damned slave!)

Radames:
(Nel volto a lei balena.)

Radames: (*looking at Aida*)
(There is a spark in her.)



Amneris:
(Ah! Tremba, rea schiave, tremba!)

Amneris:
Ah! Tremble, damned slave, tremble!)

Radames:
(Lo sdegno ed il sospetto)

Radames:
(There is disdain and suspicion.)

Amneris:
(Ch'io nel tuo cor discenda!)

Amneris:
(That I might arouse your heart!)

Radames:
(Guai se l'arcano affetto a noi leggesse in core!)

Radames:
(Woe if she reads the secret love we have in our hearts!)

Amneris:
(Trema che il ver m'apprenda quel pianto e quel rossor!)

Amneris:
(Tremble that I may know the truth of your tears and your blushing!)

Radames:
(Guai se leggesse in cor!)

Radames:
(Woe if she reads our hearts!)

Aida:
(Ah! no, sulla mia patria non geme il cor soltanto; quello ch'io verso è pianto di sventurato amor!)

Aida:
(Ah! No, in my heart I grieve not for my country; those tears that pour from me are tears of unfortunate love!)

Radames:
(Nel volto a lei balena lo sdegno ed il sospetto.
Guai se l'arcano affetto a noi leggesse in cor!)

Radames:
(In her look she has disdain and dark suspicion.
Woe if she reads the secret love that is in our hearts!)

Amneris:

(Rea schiava, trema!
Ch'io nel tuo cor discenda!
Ah! trema che il ver m'apprenda
quel pianto e quel rossor!)

Amneris:

(Damned slave, tremble!
Could I be the one your heart despises!
Ah! Tremble that I may know the truth of
your tears and your blushing!)

*The Pharaoh enters, preceded by his guards, and followed by Ramphis, Ministers,
Priests, Captains and Officers..*

Il Re:

Alta cagion v'aduna, o fidi Egizi,
al vostro Re d'intorno.
Dai confin d'Etiopia un Messaggero
dianzi giungea.
Gravi novelle ei reca.
Vi piaccia udirlo.
Il Messagger s'avanzi!

Pharaoh:

A great cause summons you around your
Pharaoh, faithful Egyptians.
A Messenger has arrived from the interior
of Ethiopia.
He brings grave news.
Please hear him.
Let the Messenger come forward!

Messaggero:

Il sacro suolo dell'Egitto è invaso
dai barbari Etiopi.
I nostri campi fu devastati...
arse le messi... e baldi della facil vittoria,
i predatori già marciano su Tebe!

Messenger:

The sacred soil of Egypt has been invaded
by the barbarous Ethiopians.
Our fields are devastated...
the crops burned...and emboldened by their
easy victory, the predators march on Thebes.

**Radames, Il Re, Ramfis, Sacerdoti,
Ministri, Capitani:**

Ed osan tanto!

**Radames, Pharaoh, Ramphis, Priests,
Ministers, Captains:**

They dare such!

Messaggero:

Un guerriero indomabile, feroce,
li conduce, Amonasro.

Messenger:

An indomitable and ferocious warrior leads
them: Amonasro.

**Radames, Il Re, Ramfis, Sacerdoti,
Ministri, Capitani:**

Il Re!

**Radames, Pharaoh, Ramphis, Priests,
Ministers, Captains:**

The King!

Aida:

(Mio padre!)

Aida:

(My father!)

Messaggero:

Già Tebe è in armi e dalle cento porte
sul barbaro invasore proromperà, guerra
recando e morte.

Messenger:

Thebes is already armed, attacked by the
barbarians from a hundred gates, all
shouting war and death.

Il Re:

Sì: guerra e morte il nostro grido sia!

Ramfis:

Guerra!

**Radames, Il Re, Ramfis, Sacerdoti,
Ministri, Capitani:**

Guerra! Guerra! Tremenda! inesorata!

Il Re:

Iside venerata di nostre schiere invite
già designava il condottier supremo:
Radames!

Aida. Amneris, Ministri, Capitani:

Radames!

Radames:

Ah! Sien grazie a Numi!
Son paghi i voti miei!

Amneris:

(Ei duce!)

Aida:

(Io tremo!)

Ministri, Capitani:

Radames! Radames! Radames! Radames!

Il Re:

Or di Vulcano al tempio muovi, o guerrier;
le sacre armi ti cingi e alla vittoria vola.

Pharaoh:

Let war and death be our cry!

Ramphis:

War!

**Radames, Pharaoh, Ramphis, Priests,
Ministers, Captains:**

War! War! Tremendous! Inexorable!

Pharaoh: (Addressing Radames)

Venerated Isis has already designated the
supreme leader of our armies:
Radames!

Aida, Amneris, Ministers, Captains:

Radames!

Radames:

Ah! Thanks to the gods!
I have been rewarded for my prayers!

Amneris:

He leads us!

Aida:

(I tremble!)

Ministers, Captains:

Radames! Radames! Radames! Radames!

Pharaoh:

Now warrior, go to the temple of Vulcan,
and receive the sacred arms and blessings
of victory.

Allegro maestoso



Su! del Nilo al sacro lido
accorrete, Egizi eroi,
da'ogni cor prorompa il grido:
guerra e morte, morte allo stranier!

Arise! From the sacred shores of the Nile,
hurry, heroic Egyptians,
from every heart give the cry:
war and death to the foreigner!

Ramfis:

Gloria ai Numi! Ognun rammenti
ch'essi reggono gli eventi,
che in poter de' Numi solo stan le sorti del
guerrier.

Ministri, Capitani:

Su! del Nilo al sacro lido
sian barriera i nostri petti;
non echeggi che un sol grido:
guerra, guerra e morte allo stranier!

Il Re:

Su! su! del Nilo al sacro lido
accorrete, Egizi eroi;
da ogni cor prorompa un grido:
Guerra e morte allo stranier!

Aida:

(Per chi piango? Per chi prego?
Qual poter m'avvince a lui!
Deggio amarlo ed è costui un nemico, uno
stranier!)

Radames:

Sacro fremito di gloria tutta l'anima
m'investe.
Su! corriamo alla vittoria!
Guerra e morte allo stranier!

Amneris:

Di mia man ricevi, o duce,
il vessillo glorioso;
ti sia guida, ti sia luce
della gloria sul sentier.

Il Re:

Su! del Nilo al sacro lido.....

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Gloria ai Numi! Ognun rammenti....

Ministri, Capitani:

Su! del Nilo al sacro lido.....

Radames e Messaggero:

Su! corriamo, su!

Ramphis:

Glory to the gods. All remember that
they rule events,
that in the power of the gods rests the fate
of the warrior.

Ministers, Captains:

Arise! From the sacred shores of the Nile,
our breasts will be a barrier.
Let there be but one cry:
war, war, and death to the foreigner!

Pharaoh:

Arise! From the sacred shores of the Nile,
hurry, heroic Egyptians,
from every heart give the cry:
war and death to the foreigner!

Aida:

(For whom do I weep! For whom do I pray!
What is the power that binds me to him!
I must love him and yet he is an enemy, an
alien!)

Radames:

Sacred stirrings of glory have invested my
soul.
Arise! Let's rush to victory!
War and death to the foreigner!

Amneris: (to Radames)

Receive from me, o leader,
the glorious standard;
it will guide you, and be a light on your path
to glory.

Pharaoh:

Arise! From the sacred shores of the Nile..

Ramphis, Priests:

Glory to the gods! All remember.....

Ministers, Captains:

Arise! From the sacred shores of the Nile..

Radames, Messenger:

Arise! We rush to victory!

Amneris:

Ti sia guida, ti sia luce della gloria sul sentier.

Aida:

(Per chi piango? Per chi prego?)

Il Re e Ramfis:

Guerra!

Sacerdoti, Ministri, Capitani:

Guerra! Guerra! Guerra!

Aida:

(Deggia amarlo, e veggo in lui un nemico, uno stranier!)

Tutti Gli Altri:

Guerra! Guerra! Stermino all'invasor!

Amneris:

Ritorna vincitor!

Amneris:

That this may guide you and light your path to glory.

Aida:

(For whom do I weep! For whom do I pray?)

Pharaoh and Ramphis:

War!

Priests, Ministers, Captains:

War! War! War!

Aida:

(I must love him, and he is an enemy, an alien!)

All:

War! War! Exterminate the invader!

Amneris: (to Radames)

Return victorious!

The musical score is for the chorus 'Ritorna vincitor!'. It features two staves: a vocal line for AMNERIS and a bass line for RADAMES, PHARAOH, PRIESTS. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is common time (C). The vocal line begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a half note A4, and then a quarter note B4. The bass line begins with a quarter note G3, followed by a half note A3, and then a quarter note B3. The lyrics 'Ri - tor - na vin - ci - tor!' are written below the staves.

Tutti:

Ritorna vincitor!

All:

Return victorious!

(All leave. Aida is alone)

Aida:

Ritorna vincitor!
E dal mio labbro uscì l'empia parola!
Vincitor del padre mio...
di lui che impugnò l'armi per me...
per ridonarmi una patria, una reggia,
e il nome il lustre che qui celar m'è forza!

Aida:

Return victorious!
And from my lips those impious words!
Victory for my father.....
who has waged war for me....
to return me to my country, my realm,
and my lineage that I am forced to conceal.

Vincitor de' miei fratelli... ond'io lo vegga,
tinto del sangue amato, trionfar nel plauso
dell'Egizie coorti!

E dietro il carro, un Re... mio padre... di
catene avvinto!

L'insana parola, o Numi, sperdete!
al seno d'un padre la figlia rendete;
struggete le squadre, dei nostri oppressor!

Ah! sventurata! Che dissi?
E l'amor mio?
Dunque scordar poss'io questo fervido
amore che, oppressa e schiava, come
raggio di sol qui mi beava?

Imprecherò la morte a Radames...
a lui ch'amo pur tanto?
Ah! Non fu in terra mai da più crudeli
angosce un core affranto!

I sacri nomi di padre d'amante,
né proferir poss'io, né ricordar.
Per l'un... per l'altro... confusa, tremante,
io piangere vorrei, vorrei pregar.
Ma la mia prece in bestemmia si muta...
delitto è il pianto a me, colpa il sospir.
In notte cupa la mente è perduta...
e nell'ansia crudel vorrei morir.
Numi, pietà del mio soffrir!
Speme non v'ha pel mio dolor.
Amor fatal, tremendo amor
spezzami il cor, fammi morir!
Numi, pietà del mio soffrir!

Victory for my brothers...who I see soiled
in loving blood, defeated by the Egyptian
armies!

And behind the chariot, the king, my father,
bound in chains!

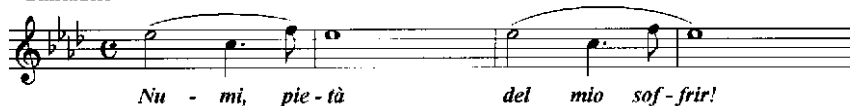
The insane words, o gods, forget them!
At a sign from my father, his daughter
returns, the squadrons of our oppressors
destroyed!

Ah! Unhappy one! What did I say?
And my love?
How can I forget that fervid love that
oppresses and enslaves me, like a ray of
sun that blesses me?

Shall I pray for the death of Radames...
whom I love so much?
Ah! There was never on earth a more
cruel anguish and such a broken heart!

Sacred gods of my loving father,
I cannot utter, nor remember.
For one..for the other..confused, trembling.
I want to weep, I want to pray.
But my prayers are blasphemy...
my tears a crime, my sighs a wrong.
In the dense night, my mind is lost...
and in this cruel anxiety I want to die.
Gods, mercy on my suffering!
There is no hope in my pain.
Fatal love, powerful love
breaks my heart. I want to die!
Gods! Have mercy on my suffering!

Cantabile



ACT I: SCENE 2

Interior of the sacred Temple of Vulcan at Memphis. There is an altar, statues of deities, emblems, and tripods with incense burning.

Andante con moto



Sacerdotesse. Sacerdoti, Ramfis:

Possente, possente Fthà, del mondo
Spirito animator, ah!
Noi t'invochiamo!
Tu che dal nulla hai tratto
L'onde, la terra, il ciel.
Noi t'invochiamo!
Immenso, immenso Fthà,
del mondo spirito fecondator, ah!
Noi t'invochiamo!

Nume che del tuo spirito sei figlio e genitor,
Noi t'invochiamo!
Fuoco increato, eterno.
Onde ebbe luce il sol, ah!
Noi t'invochiamo!
Vita dell'universo, mito d'eterno amor,
Noi t'invochiam!
Immenso Fthà!
Noi t'invochiam!

Priestesses, Priests, Ramphis:

All-powerful, all-powerful Phthà,
animating spirit of the world, ah!
We invoke you!
You who have created the waves,
the land, the heavens.
We invoke you!
All-powerful Phthà.
Spirit that created the world. Ah!
We invoke you!

God whose spirit is both son and father,
we invoke you!
Creator of fire, from which the sun has its
light, Ah!
We invoke you!
Life of the universe, gift of eternal love,
we invoke you!
All-powerful Phthà!
We invoke you!

Sacred dance of the Priestesses. Radames enters, unarmed, and approaches the altar where the Priestesses place a silver veil on his head.

Sacerdotesse:

Immenso Fthà!

Priestesses:

All-powerful Phthà!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Noi t'invochiam!

Ramphis, Priests:

We invoke you!

Ramfis:

Mortal, diletto ai Numi, a te fidate
son d'Egitto le sorti.

Ramphis: (to Radames)

Mortal, beloved of the gods, to you the fate
of Egypt is committed.

Il sacro brando dal Dio temprato, per tua
man diventi.

Ai nemici terror, folgore, morte.

Sacerdoti:

Il sacro brando dal Dio temprato.....

Ramfis:

... folgore, morte,

Nume, custode e vindice,
di questa sacra terra. La mano tua distendi
sovra l'Egizio suol.

Radames:

Nume, che duce ed arbitro sei d'ogni
umana guerra, proteggi tu, difendi d'Egitto
il sacro suol.

Sacerdoti, Ramfis:

Nume, custode e vindice.....

Radames:

Proteggi tu, difendi d'Egitto il sacro suol.

Sacerdotesse:

Possente Fthà,
Del mondo creator, ah!
Possente Fthà,
Spirito animator,
Spirito fecondator,
Immenso Fthà!

Radames:

Possente Fthà!

The sacred sword, tempered by god, will
rise in your hand.

Strike the enemy with terror and death.

Priests:

The sacred sword, tempered by god.....

Ramphis:

...strike death.

(turns to the statue of the god)

God, leader and judge,
from this sacred land you have spread your
hand over Egyptian soil.

Radames:

God, who is leader and judge of every
human war, protect and defend sacred
Egyptian soil.

Priests , Ramphis::

God, leader and judge.....

Radames:

Protect and defend sacred Egyptian soil.

*(While Radames is being vested with the
consecrated armor, the Priests and
Priestesses resume the religious hymn
and mystic dance.)*

Priestesses:

All-powerful Phthà!
Creator of the world, ah!
All-powerful Phthà!
Animating spirit,
Progenitor spirit,
All-powerful Phthà!

Radames:

All-powerful Phthà!

ACT II: SCENE 1

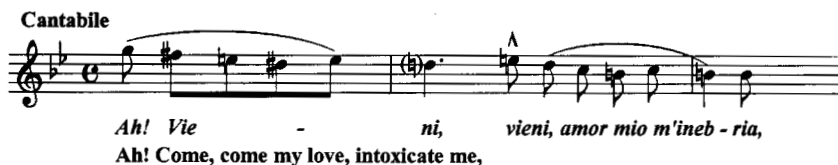
Amneris's apartments. Amneris is surrounded by female slaves who adorn her for the triumphal celebration, and Moorish slave boys dance.

Schiave:

Chi mai fra gl'inni e i plausi
erge alla gloria il vol.
Al par d'un Dio terribile,
fulgente al par del sol!
Vieni: sul crin ti piovano
contesti al lauri i fior:
Suonin di gloria i cantici
coi cantici d'amor.

Slave Girls:

Who raises your wishes to glory with
hymns and praise.
Equal to a terrible,
resplendent as the sun!
Come: on your tresses rain
laurels and flowers.
Sing the songs of glory
with the songs of love.

**Amneris:**

(Ah! Vieni, viene amor mio, m'inebria,
fammi beato il cor!)

Amneris:

(Ah! Come, my love, intoxicate me,
make my heart beat!)

Schiave:

Or dove son le barbare
orde dello stranier?
Siccome nebbia sparvero
al soffio del guerrier.
Vieni: di gloria il premio
Raccogli, o vincitor;
T'arrese la vittoria,
T'arrenderà l'amor.

Slave Girls:

Now where are those barbarian
hordes of foreigners?
They scatter like the mist
at the breath of the warrior.
Come o conqueror and gather
the reward of glory.
Victory smiled upon you,
love will smile upon you.

Amneris:

(Ah! Vieni, vieni amor mio, rattivami
d'un caro accento ancor!)

Amneris:

(Ah! Come, my love, revive me
again with the sweet sound of your voice!)

Schiave::

Vieni; sul crin ti piovano
contesti ai lauri i fior.
Suonin di gloria i cantici
coi cantici d'amor.

Slave Girls:

Come; on your tresses rain
laurels and flowers.
Sing the songs of glory
with the songs of love.

Amneris:

(Ah! Vieni, vieni amor mio, m'inebria,
fammi beato il cor!)

Silenzio! Aida verso noi s'avanza.
Figlia dei vinti, il suo dolor m'è sacro.

Nel rivederla, il dubbio atroce in me si
desta...
Il mistero fatal si squarci alfine!

Fu la sorte dell'armi a tuoi funesta,
Povera Aida! Il lutto che ti pesa sul cor
teco divido.
Io son l'amica tua...tutto da me tu avrai...
Vivrai felice!

Aida:

Felice esser poss'io lungi dal suol natio, qui
dove ignota m'è la sorte del padre e dei
fratelli?

Amneris:

Ben ti compagno! Pure hanno un confine
I mali di quaggiù.
Sanerà il tempo le angosce del tuo core,
e più che il tempo, un Dio possente.. amore!

Aida:

(Amore, amore!
Gaudio, tormento, soave ebbrezza, ansia
crudel!
Ne' tuoi dolori la vita io sento, un tuo
sorriso mi schiude il ciel.)

Amneris:

(Ah, quel pallore... quel turbamento
svelan l'arcana febbre d'amor.
D'interrogarla quasi ho sgomento,
divido l'ansie del suo terror)

Amneris:

(Ah! Come, my love, intoxicate me,
Make my heart beat!)

Silence! Aida approaches us.
Daughter of the vanquished, her grief is
sacred to me.

(At a sign from Amneris, all withdraw.)

When I see her again, fearful doubt is
awakened in me!
Let the fatal mystery at last be revealed!

(to Aida, with feigned affection)

The fate of war was deadly to your people.
Poor Aida! I share with you the burden in
your heart.
I am your friend. I will give you everything
and you will live happily!

Aida:

Can I be happy far from my homeland,
here where the fate of my father and
brothers is unknown to me?

Amneris:

I have compassion for you. I share your
grief but it will end.
Time will heal the anguish in your heart,
and more than time, a powerful god....love!

Aida:

(Love, love!
Tormented joy, gentle sorrow, cruel
anxiety!
I feel life in your compassion, your smile
opens heaven.)

Amneris: *(looking fixedly at Aida)*

(Ah! That pallor...that torment reveals the
mysterious secret of feverish love.
I'll question her and pretend to share the
anxiety of her torment)
(to Aida)

Ebben: qual nuovo fremito t' assai gentil
Aida?

I tuoi segreti svelami,
all' amor mio t' affida.
Tra i forti che pugarono
della tua patria a danno.
Qualcuno... un dolce affanno
forse... a te in cor destò?

Aida:
Che parli?

Amneris:
A tutti barbara non si mostrò la sorte se in
campo il duce impavido cadde trafitto a morte.

Aida:
Che mai dicesti! Misera!

Amneris:
Sì... Radames da' tuoi fu spento...

Aida:
Misera!

Amneris:
E pianger puoi?

Aida:
Per sempre io piangerò!

Amneris:
Gli Dei t' han vendicata.

Aida:
Avversi sempre a me furo i Numi.

Amneris:
Trema! In cor ti lessi...
Tu l' ami...

Aida:
Io!

Amneris:
Non mentire!

Well: what new fears assault you, gentle
Aida?

Unveil your secrets, and confide in me
about love.
Among those brave men who fought so
valiantly for your country, is there someone
for whom sorrow has been awakened on
your heart?

Aida:
What did you say?

Amneris:
The fates are not so kind if a brave leader
falls to his death on the battlefield.

Aida:
What did you say? Misery!

Amneris:
Yes... Radames was killed....

Aida:
Misery!

Amneris:
And you weep?

Aida:
I will always weep!

Amneris:
The gods have been avenging.

Aida:
The furor of the gods was always against me.

Amneris:
Tremble! I read the secret in your heart...
You love him....

Aida:
I!

Amneris:
Don't lie!

Un detto ancora e il vero saprò.
Fissami in volto...io t'ingannava...
Radames vive!

Aida:

Vive! Ah, grazie, o Numi!

Amneris:

E ancor mentir tu speri?
Sì, tu l'ami! Ma l'amo anch'io,
intendi tu? Son tua rivale, figlia dei Faraoni.

Aida:

Mia rivale!
Ebben sia pure... Anch'io son tal.....

Ah! Che dissi mai? Pietà, perdono! Ah!

Pietà ti prenda del mio dolor.
È vero, io l'amo d'immenso amor.
Tu sei felice, tu sei possente,
io vivo solo per questo amor!

Amneris:

Trema, vil schiava! Spezza il tuo core;
Segnar tua morte può quest'amore;
Del tuo destino arbitra sono,
D'odio e vendetta le furie ho in cor.

Aida:

Tu sei felice, tu sei possente.
Io vivo solo per questo amor!
Pietà ti prenda del mio dolor!

Amneris:

Trema, vil schiava! Spezza il tuo core.
Del tuo destino arbitra sono.
D'odio e vendetta le furie ho in cor.

Coro:

Su! Del Nilo al sacro lido
sien barriera i nostri petti;
non echeggi che un sol grido:
guerra e morte allo stranier!

One more word and I will know the truth.
Look at me firmly...I have deceived you..
Radames lives!

Aida:

He lives! Ah, thanks to the gods!

Amneris:

And you still lie to me?
Yes. You love him! But I love him too.
Do you understand? I am your rival, a
daughter of the Pharaohs.

Aida:

Mi rival!
So be it. I am also a.....

(restraining herself)

Ah! What did I say? Mercy, pardon! Ah!

Have mercy on my grief.
It is true, I love him immensely.
You are happy, you are powerful,
I live only for that love!

Amneris:

Tremble, vile slave! Be heartbroken.
This love shall signal your death.
I judge your destiny.
I have vengeance and hate in my heart.

Aida:

You are happy, you are powerful.
I live only for that love!
Have mercy on my grief!

Amneris:

Tremble, vile slave! Be heartbroken.
I am the judge of your destiny.
I have hate and vengeance in my heart.

Chorus: *(from outside)*

Arise! From the sacred shores of the Nile,
our breasts will be a barrier.
Let there be but one cry:
war and death to the foreigner!

Amneris:

Alla pompa che s'appresta,
Meco, o schiava, assisterai;
Tu prostrata nella povere,
Io sul trono, accanto al Re.

Aida:

Ah pietà! Che più mi resta?
Un deserto è la mia vita;
Viva e regna, il tuo furore io tra breve
placherò.
Quest'amore che t'irrita nella tomba io
spegnerò.

Amneris:

Vien, mi segui, apprenderai
se lottar tu puoi con me.

Aida:

Ah! pietà!
Quest'amor nella tomba io spegnerò.
Pietà! pietà!

Coro:

Guerra e morte allo stranier!

Amneris:

... e apprenderai se lottar tu puoi con me.

Coro:

Guerra e morte allo stranier!

Aida:

Numi, pietà del mio martir,
speme non v'ha pel mio dolor!
Numi, pietà del mio soffrir!
Numi, pietà, pietà, pietà!

Amneris:

The pomp of celebration approaches.
Come with me slave, and assist me.
Prostrate yourself on the dust.
I will be on the throne, next to the Pharaoh.

Aida:

Ah mercy! What more remains for me?
My life is a desert;
life and reign, but your fury will soon be
appeased.
This love that irritates you will be
extinguished in the tomb.

Amneris:

Come, follow me, you will learn to struggle
with me.

Aida:

Ah! Mercy!
This love will be extinguished in the tomb.
Mercy! Mercy!

Chorus:

War and death to the foreigner!

Amneris:

...and you will learn you cannot fight me.

Chorus:

War and death to the foreigner!
(Amneris exits)

Aida:

Gods, have mercy on my suffering,
I have no hope from my sadness!
Gods, mercy on my suffering!
Gods, mercy, mercy, mercy!

ACT II: SCENE 2

The entrance gates of the city of Thebes, before the temple of Ammon

Popolo:

Gloria all'Egitto, ad Iside che il sacro suol
protegge!

Al Re che il Delta regge inni festosi
alziam!

Gloria! Gloria! Gloria! Gloria al Re!

Donne:

S'intrecci il loto al lauro sul crin dei
vincitori!

Nembo gentil di fiori
stenda sull'armi un vel.

Danziam, fanciulle egizie,
le mistiche carole, come d'intorno al sole
Danzano gli astri in ciel!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Della vittoria agl'arbitri supremi il guardo
ergete;
grazie agli Dei rendete nel fortunato dì.

Popolo:

Come d'intorno al sole danzano gli astri in
ciel!

Inni festosi alziam al Re.

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Grazie agli Dei rendete nel fortunato dì.

People:

Glory to Egypt, and to Isis who protects
our sacred soil!

We raise hymns of praise to the Pharaoh
who rules the Delta!

Glory! Glory! Glory! Glory to the Pharaoh!

Women:

Weave the lotus and the laurel for the
crown of the victors!

A gentle shower of flowers!
Spread a veil on the armies.

We dance, Egyptian daughters,
the mystic dance like the stars of heaven
around the sun!

Ramphis, Priests:

The supreme judges raise their eyes to the
victory.

Render thanks to the gods on this fortunate
day.

People:

Like the stars of heaven that dance around
the sun!

We raise hymns of praise to the Pharaoh..

Ramphis, Priests:

Render thanks to the gods on this fortunate
day.

*The Egyptian troops file before the Pharaoh in chariots bearing their ensigns, sacred
vases and statues of the gods. Dancing girls carry the treasures of the vanquished,
and lastly, Radames appears, supported under a canopy borne by Officers.*

Grand March

Allegro maestoso



Popolo:

Vieni, o guerriero vindice,
Vieni a gioir con noi; sul passo degli eroi
I lauri, i fior versiam!
Gloria al guerrier, gloria!
Gloria all'Egitto, gloria!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Agli arbitri supremi il guardo ergete;
Grazie agli Dei rendete nel fortunato dì.

Il Re:

Salvator della patria io ti saluto.
Vieni, e mia figlia di sua man ti porga il
serto trionfale.

Ora, a me chiedi quanto più brami.
Nulla a te negato sarà in tal dì; lo giuro
per la corona mia, pei sacri Numi.

Radames:

Concedi in pria che innanzi a te sien tratti
i prigionier.

*The Ethiopian prisoners are brought forward by Guards.
The last to appear is Amonasro, dressed as an Officer.*

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Grazie agli Dei rendete
nel fortunato dì.

Aida:

Che veggo!... Egli!... Mio padre!

Tutti:

Suo padre!

Amneris:

In poter nostro!

People:

Come, o victorious warrior,
come and share our joy. In the path of the
heroes we shed flowers and laurels!
Glory to the warrior, glory!
Glory to Egypt, glory!

Ramphis, Priests:

The supreme judges raise their eyes to the
victory. Render thanks to the gods on this
fortunate day.

*(Pharaoh descends from the throne to
embrace Radames)*

Pharaoh:

Savior of our country, I salute you.
Come, and my daughter will place the
triumphal crown on you.

*(Radames kneels before Amneris who
places the crown on him)*
Now, ask of me your wish.
Nothing will be denied you; I swear it by
my crown and the sacred gods.

Radames:

First concede to let the prisoners come
forth before you.

Ramphis, Priests:

Render thanks to the gods on this fortunate
day.

Aida:

What do I see! Him! My father!

All:

Her father!

Amneris:

In our power!

Aida:

Tu! Prigionier!

Aida: (*embracing her father*)

You! A prisoner!

Amonasro:

Non mi tradir!

Amonasro: (*whispering to Aida*)

Don't betray me!

Il Re:

T'appressa...

Dunque tu sei?...

Pharaoh: (*to Amonasro*)

Come nearer...

Who are you?

Amonasro:

Suo padre. Anch'io pugnai...
 vinti noi fummo, morte invan cercai.
 Quest'assisa ch'io vesto vi dica
 che il mio Re, la mia patria ho difeso;
 fu la sorte a nostr'armi nemica.
 Tornò vano dei forti l'ardir.
 Al mio pie nella polve disteso
 giacque il Re da più colpi trafitto.
 Se l'amor della patria è delitto
 siamo rei tutti, siamo pronti a morir!

Amonasro:

Her father. I also fought....
 I was defeated, I yearned for death in vain.
 This uniform I wear may tell you
 that I defended my country for my king;
 victory was the destiny of our enemy armies.
 The courage of the brave was in vain.
 At my feet in the dust lay my king, pained
 by many wounds,
 If the love of country is a crime,
 we are all criminals, all ready to die!

Moderato

Ma tu, Re, tu signore possente,
 A costoro ti volgi clemente;
 Oggi noi siamo percossi dal fato,
 ma doman voi potria il fato colpir.

But you, Pharaoh, you powerful lord,
 be merciful to these men.
 Today we are struck by fate,
 but tomorrow fate may strike you.

Aida:

Ma tu, Re, tu signore possente,
 a costoro ti volgi clemente.

Aida:

But you, Pharaoh, you powerful lord,
 be merciful to these men.

Schiave, Prigionieri:

Sì, dai Numi percossi noi siamo,
 tua pietà, tua clemenza imploriamo.
 Ah! Giammai di soffrir vi sia dato
 ciò che in oggi n'è dato soffrir!

Slaves, Prisoners:

Yes, we were struck by the gods.
 We implore your pity and mercy.
 Ah! May you never have to suffer
 the way we have had to suffer!

Amonasro:

Ah! Doman voi potria il fato colpir.

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Struggi, o Re, queste ciurme feroci,
chiudi il core alle perfide voci;
fu dai Numi votati alla morte.
Or de' Numi si compia il voler!

Aida, Schiave, Prigionieri:

Pietà!

Aida:

Ma tu, o Re, signor possente,
a costoro ti volgi clemente;
oggi noi siam percossi dal fato,
ma doman voi potria il fato colpir.

Schiave, Prigionieri:

Sì, dai Numi percossi noi siamo,
tua pietà, tua clemenza imploriamo;
ah! Giammai di soffrir vi sia dato
ciò che in oggi n'è dato soffrir!

Amonasro:

Ah! doman voi potria il fato colpir.

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Struggi, o Re, queste ciurme feroci,
Chiudi il core alle perfide voci;
fu dai Numi votati alla morte,
or de' Numi si compia il voler!

Aida, Schiave, Prigionieri:

Pietà!

Aida:

Ma tu, o Re, signor possente,
a costoro ti mostra clemente.

Amneris:

(Quali sguardi sovr'essa ha rivolti!
Di qual fiamma balenano i volti!)

Il Re:

Or che fausti ne arridon gli eventi
a costoro mostriaci clementi.

Amonasro:

Ah! Tomorrow fate may strike you.

Ramphis, Priests:

Oh Pharaoh, destroy these savage hordes,
close your heart to their perfidious voices;
the gods doomed them to death.
Let the will of the gods be done!

Aida, Slaves, Prisoners:

Pity!

Aida:

But you, Pharaoh, you powerful lord,
be merciful to these men.
Today we are victims of fate,
but tomorrow fate may strike you.

Slaves, Prisoners:

Yes, we were stricken by the gods.
We implore your pity and mercy.
Ah! May you never have to suffer
the way we have had to suffer!

Amonasro:

Ah! Tomorrow fate may strike you.

Ramphis, Priests:

Oh Pharaoh, destroy these savage hordes.
Close your heart to their perfidious voices.
The gods doomed them to death.
Let the will of the gods be done!

Aida, Slaves, Prisoners:

Mercy!

Aida:

But you, Pharaoh, you powerful lord,
be merciful to these men.

Amneris:

(What glances he makes toward her!
Their faces are aflame!)

Pharaoh:

Now that events smile favorably upon us,
let us show mercy to these people.

Schiave, Prigionieri:

Tua pietade, tua clemenza imploriamo,
Ah, pietà! pietà!

Popolo:

Sacerdoti, gli sdegni placate, l'umil prece
ascoltate.

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

A morte! A morte! A morte!
O Re, struggi queste ciurme.

Amonasro:

Oggi noi siam percossi dal fato,
voi doman potria il fato colpir.

Radames:

(Il dolor che in quel volto favella
al mio sguardo la rende più bella;
ogni stilla del pianto adorato
nel mio petto ravviva l'amor)

Amneris:

(Quali sguardi sovr'essa ha rivolti!
Di qual fiamma balenano i volti!
Ed io sola, avvilita, reietta?
La vendetta mi rugge nel cor.)

Amonasro:

Tua pietà, tua clemenze imploriamo.....

Il Re:

Or che fausti ne arridon gli eventi
a costoro mostriaci clementi;
la pietà sale ai Numi gradita
E rafferma de'prenci il poter.

Aida:

Tua pietà imploro...
Oggi noi siam percossi,
Doman voi potria il fato colpir.

Schiave, Prigionieri:

Pietà, pietà, ah pietà!
Tua clemenza imploriam.
Tua pietade, tua clemenza invochiamo.

Slaves, Prisoners:

We implore your pity and mercy,
Ah! Mercy! Mercy!

People:

Priests, placate your scorn and heed their
humble pleas.

Ramphis, Priests:

Death! Death! Death!
Oh Pharaoh, suppress this trickery.

Amonasro:

Today we are victims of fate,
tomorrow fate may strike you.

Radames: (*looking at Aida*)

(The sorrow in her face makes her more
beautiful to me.
Every drop of her beloved tears revives
love in my breast.)

Amneris:

(What glances he makes toward her!
Their faces are aflame!)
And I, reviled, rejected?
Vengeance inflames my heart.)

Amonasro:

We implore you, pity, mercy.....

Pharaoh:

Now that events smile favorably upon us
let us show mercy to these people.
The grateful gods are merciful and
empower their princes.

Aida:

I implore your mercy....
Today we are struck by fate.
Tomorrow fate may strike you.

Slaves, Prisoners:

Mercy, mercy, ah mercy!
We implore your mercy.
We invoke your mercy and clemency.

Popolo:

Sacerdoti, gli sdegni placate.
L'umil prece de' vinti ascoltate; pietà!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Si compisca dei Numi il voler!
Struggi, o Re, queste ciurme feroci.
Fu dai Numi votati alla morte,
si compisca de' Numi il voler!

Aida:

Ma tu, o Re, tu signore possente....

Radames:

(Il dolor la rende più bella....)

Amonasro:

Ma tu, o Re, tu signore possente.....

Il Re:

La pietà sale ai Numi gradita.....

Schiave, Prigionieri:

Sì, dai Numi percossi noi siamo.....

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Struggi, o Re, queste ciurme feroci.....

Popolo:

E tu, o Re possente, tu forte, a clemenza
dischiudi il pensier.

Amneris:

(Ed io sola, avvilita, ecc)

Radames::

O Re: pei sacri Numi,
per lo splendor della tua corona,
compier giurasti il voto mio.

Il Re:

Giurai.

Radames:

Ebbene: a te pei prigionieri Etiopi
Vita domando e libertà.

People:

Priests, placate your scorn and heed their
humble pleas; mercy!

Ramphis, Priests:

Let the will of the gods be done!
Oh Pharaoh destroy these savage hordes.
The gods doomed them to death.
Let the will of the gods be done!

Aida:

But you, o Pharaoh, powerful lord....

Radames:

(The sorrow in her face makes her more beautiful.)

Amonasro:

But you, o Pharaoh, powerful lord....

Pharaoh:

The grateful gods have mercy.....

Slaves, Prisoners:

Yes, we were stricken by the gods....

Ramphis, Priests:

Oh Pharaoh, destroy these savage hordes....

People:

And you, o powerful Pharaoh, you are
strong, let mercy flow from your thoughts.

Amneris:

(And I vilified, rejected.....)

Radames:

Oh Pharaoh, by the sacred gods,
by the glory of your crown,
you swore to fulfill my vow.

Pharaoh:

I swore.

Radames:

Then I demand life and liberty for the
Ethiopian prisoners.

Amneris:

(Per tutti!)

Sacerdoti:

Morte ai nemici della patria!

Popolo:

Grazia per gli infelici!

Ramfis:

Ascolta o Re. Tu pure,
giovine eroe, saggio consiglio ascolta.
Son nemici e prodi sono;
la vendetta hanno nel cor,
fatti audaci dal perdono
correranno all'armi ancor!

Radames:

Spento Amonasro, il re guerrier, non resta
speranza ai vinti.

Ramfis:

Almeno, arr a di pace e securtà, fra noi
resti col padre Aida.

Il Re:

Al tuo consiglio io cedo.
Di securtà, di pace un miglior pegno
or io vo' darvi:
Radamès, la patria tutto a te deve.
d'Amneris la mano premio ti sia.
Sovra l'Egitto un giorno con essa regnerai.

Amneris:

(Venga la schiava, venga a rapirmi l'amor
mio... se l'osa!)

Il Re, Popolo:

Gloria all'Egitto, ad Iside che il sacro suol
difende.
S'intrecci il loto al lauro sul crin del
vincitor!

Schiave, Prigionieri:

Gloria al clemente Egizio
che i nostri ceppi ha sciolto.

Amneris:

(For all!)

Priests:

Death to the enemies of our country!

People:

Grace for the unhappy!

Ramphis:

Listen o Pharaoh. Young hero listen to the
following wise counsel.
They are an enemy with pride and
with vengeance in their heart.
If emboldened by a pardon they will take
arms again!

Radames:

Their warrior king, Amonasro, is dead, and
no hope remains for the vanquished.

Ramphis:

At least as security and peace, let Aida
and her father remain. The rest can go free.

Pharaoh:

I yield to your counsel.
For the security of our country, I will give
you a better pledge.
Radames, I give you the country and the
hand of Amneris as your reward.
One day, with her, you will rule over Egypt.

Amneris:

(Now let the slave come... let her dare to
come to take my love from me!)

Pharaoh, People:

Glory to Egypt, and to Isis who protects
our sacred soil!
On the head of the victors place the
laurels!

Slaves, Prisoners:

Glory to merciful Egypt
who has loosened our shackles,

che ci ridona ai liberi
solchi del patrio suol!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Inni leviamo ad Iside che il sacro suol
difende!
Pregiam che i fati arridano
fausti alla patria ognor.

Aida:

(Qual speme omai più restami?
A lui la gloria, il trono, a me l'oblio... le
lacrime d'un disperato amor.)

Radames:

(Davverso Nume il folgore sul capo mio
discende.
Ah no! D'Egitto il soglio son val d'Aida il
cor.)

Amneris:

(Dall'inatteso giublio inebriata io sono;
tutti in un dì si compiono i sogni del mio
cor.)

Ramfis:

Pregiam che i fati arridano fausti alla
patria ognor.

Il Re, Popolo:

Gloria... ad Iside!

Amonasro:

Fa cor: della tua patria I lieti eventi aspetta;
Per noi della vendetta già prossimo è
l'albor.

Radames:

(Qual inattesa folgore
su capo mio discende! Ah!
Ah no! D'Egitto il trono non val d'Aida il
cor.
... d'Egitto il suol non val d'Aida il cor.
... d'Egitto il soglio non val d'Aida il cor.)

who restores us to freedom and the path to
our native soil!

Ramphis, Priests:

We raise hymns to Isis who has defended
our sacred soil!
We pray that the fates will ever smile
favorably on our country.

Aida:

(What hope remains for me?)
He has glory and the throne. For me there
is only oblivion, tears, and a hopeless love.)

Radames:

(The thunder of the avenging gods
descends on my head.
Ah no! The throne of Egypt is not worth
losing Aida's heart.)

Amneris:

(I am intoxicated by this unexpected joy.
The dreams in my heart are fulfilled in this
one day!)

Ramphis:

We pray that the fates will ever smile
favorably on our country.

Pharaoh, People:

Glory....to Isis!

Amonasro: (to Aida)

Take heart: your country anticipates
propitious.
For us the dawn of vengeance is already
near.

Radames:

(What unexpected thunder descends on my
head! Ah!
Ah no! The throne of Egypt is not worth
losing Aida's heart...
..the soil of Egypt is not worth losing Aida's
heart.)

Amneris:

(Tutte in un dì si compiono
le gioie del mio cor.
Ah! Dall'inatteso guadio
inebriata io sono)

Amonasro:

Fa cor: la tua patria
i lieti eventi aspetta.....

Il Re, Popolo:

Gloria, all'Egitto e ad Iside.....

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Inni leviamo ad Iside.....

Aida::

(A me l'oblio, le lacrime.
Ah! Qual speme omai più restami?
A lui la gloria, il trono, a me l'oblio, le
lacrime d'un disperato amor)

Schiave, Prigionieri:

Gloria al clemente Egizio.....

Amneris:

(All in one day the joy in my heart is
fulfilled.
Ah! I am intoxicated by this unexpected
joy.)

Amonasro:

Take heart: your country anticipates
propitious events.....

Pharaoh, People:

Glory to Egypt and Isis.....

Ramphis, Priests:

We raise our prayers to Isis.....

Aida:

(For me oblivion and tears.
Ah! What hope remains for me?
He has glory and the throne. For me there
is only despair, tears, and a hopeless love.)

Slaves, Prisoners:

Glory to merciful Egypt.....

ACT III

*The Banks of the Nile. The Temple of Isis is half concealed among the foliage.
It is an evening with starlight and bright moonlight.*

Sacerditesse, Sacerdoti:

O tu che sei d'Osiride.
Madre immortale e sposa,
Diva che i casti palpiti desti agli umani in cor.
Soccorri a noi pietosa, madre d'immenso
amor.

Priestesses, Priests:

O you Osiris, immortal mother and spouse.
Goddess who stirs the beatings of human
hearts.
Mother of immense love help us and be
merciful and compassionate.

Amneris approaches the shore by boat, accompanied by Ramphis, closely veiled women, and Guards.

Ramfis::

Vieni d'Iside al tempio: alla vigilia
delle tue nozze, invoca della Diva il favore.
Iside legge de' mortali nel core; ogni
mistero degli umani a lei è noto.

Amneris:

Sì! Io pregherò che Radamès mi doni
tutto il suo cor, come il mio cor a lui
sacro è per sempre.

Ramfis:

Andiamo.
Pregherai fino all'alba; io sarò teco.

Sacerdotesse, Sacerdoti:

Soccorri a noi pietosa,
Madre d'immenso amor.

Aida:

Qui Radamès verrà!
Che vorrà dirmi?
Io tremo... Ah! Se tu vieni
a recarmi, o crudel, l'ultimo addio.
Del Nilo i cupi vortici
mi daran tomba... e pace forse, e oblio.

Ramphis: (to Amneris)

Come to the temple of Isis on the vigil of
your wedding, and invoke the Goddess's
blessings. Isis reads the hearts of mortals;
every human mystery is known to her.

Amneris:

Yes, I will pray that Radames will give me
his whole heart, as I will give him my
consecrated heart forever.

Ramphis:

Let us go.
Pray until dawn; I will be with you.
(they enter the temple)

Priestesses, Priests:

Mother of immense love help us and be
merciful and compassionate.

Aida: (Aida enters cautiously)

Radames will come here!
What will he say to me?
I tremble. Ah! You come to give me a
cruel, ultimate farewell.
The deep Nile will be my tomb, and
perhaps peace and eternal oblivion.

Andante mosso



O patria mia, mai più ti revedrò!
O cieli azzurri, o dolci aure native,
dove sereno il nido mattin brillò,
O verdi colli, o profumate rive.
O patria mia, mai più ti revedrò!
O fresche valli, o quieto asil beato,

Oh my country, I will never see you again!
Oh beautiful blue skies, the native soft air,
where my life was calm and peaceful.
Oh verdant hills, oh perfumed waters,
Oh my country, I will never see you again!
Oh fresh valleys, oh quiet dwellings,

che un dì promesso dall'amor mi fu.
Or che d'amore il sogno è dileguato,
o patria mia, non ti vedrò mai più!

It bore the promises of love,
and now that hope is vanished.
O my country, I will never see you again!

Ciel! mio padre!

(Amonasro appears)
Heavens! My father!

Amonasro:

A te grave cagion m'adduce, Aida....
nulla sfugge al mio sguardo.
D'amor ti struggi per Radamès...
ei t'ama... qui lo attendi.
Dei Faraon la figlia è tua rivale...
razza infame, aborrita e a noi fatale!

Amonasro:

A grave cause leads me to you, Aida...
Nothing escapes my sight.
You destroy yourself with your love for
Radames....you await him here.
The Pharaoh's daughter is your rival...
Infamous race, abhorred and fatal to us!

Aida:

E in suo potere io sto! Io, d'Amonasro
figlia!

Aida:

And I am in their power, the daughter of
Amonasro!

Amonasro:

In poter di lei! No!... se lo brami
la possente rival tu vincerai,
e patria, e trono, e amor, tutto tu avrai.

Amonasro:

In her power! No! If you wish you could
defeat that powerful rival, and country,
throne, and love, will be yours.

Allegro giusto



Rivedrai le foreste imbalsamate, le fresche
valli, i nostri tempi d'or.

You will again see our balmy forests, the
fresh valleys, and our golden temples.

Aida:

Rivedrò le foreste imbalsamate, le fresche
valli, i nostri tempi d'or.

Aida:

I will see our balmy forests, fresh valleys
and our temples of gold!

Amonasro:

Sposa felice a lui che amasti tanto,
tripudi immensi ivi potrai gioir.

Amonasro:

And be the happy bride of the man you
love so much, and be immensely happy.

Aida:

Un giorno solo di sì dolce incanto,
un'ora, un'ora di tal gioia, e poi morir!

Aida:

Just one day of such enchantment,
one hour, one hour of joy before I die!

Amonasro:

Pur rammenti che a noi l'Egizio immite,
le case, i tempi, e l'are profanò.
Trasse in ceppi le vergini rapite;
madri, vecchi, fanciulli ei trucidò.

Aida:

Ah! ben rammento quegl'infausti giorni!
Rammento i lutti che il mio cor soffrì.
Deh! Fate, o Numi, che per soì ritorni
l'alba invocata de' sereni dì.

Amonasro:

Non fia che tardi. In armi ora si desta.
Il popol nostro, tutto è pronto già.
Vittoria avrem... Solo a saper mi resta,
qual sentier il nemico seguirà.

Aida:

Chi scoprirlo potria? Chi mai?

Amonasro::

Tu stessa!

Aida:

Io!

Amonasro:

Radamès so che qui attendi... ei t'ama...
Ei conduce gli Egizi... Intendi?...

Aida:

Orrore!
Che mi consigli tu? No! No! Giammai!

Amonasro:

Su, dunque! Sorgete Egizie coorti!
Col fuoco struggete le nostre città.
Spargete il terrore, le stragi, la morte...
Al vostro fuore più freno non v'ha.

Aida:

Ah padre! Padre!...

Amonasro:

Mia figlia ti chiami!

Amonasro:

But remember that the merciless Egyptians
profaned our houses and temples,
put our virgins in chains and ravished them,
slew mothers, elderly, and children.

Aida:

Ah! I remember those unhappy days well!
I remember the grief I suffered.
Ah! Fate, oh gods, let us return to the
longed for dawn of peaceful days.

Amonasro:

Don't delay. Our people are already in
arms, and all is ready.
We will be victorious. It only remains for me
to know the path the enemy will follow.

Aida:

Who will be able to discover it? Who?

Amonasro:

You alone!

Aida:

I!

Amonasro:

Radames will come here soon.. He loves
you. He leads the Egyptians. Understand?

Aida:

Horror!
What are you asking me to do? No! No! Never!

Amonasro: (*impetuously and savagely*)

Up, then! Arise Egyptian legions!
Destroy our cities with fire.
Spread terror, carnage, and death...
There is no resistance to your fury.

Aida:

Ah father! Father!

Amonasro:

You call yourself my daughter?

Aida:

Pietà! Pietà! Pietà!

Amonasro:

Flutti di sangue scorrono sulle città dei vinti.

Vedi? Dai negri vortici si levano gli estinti, ti additan essi e gridano:

“Per te la patria muor!”

Aida:

Pietà! Pietà, padre, pietà!

Amonasro:

Una larva orribile

fra l'ombre a noi s'affaccia.

Trema! Le scarne braccia sul capo tuo levò...

Tua madre ell'è ravvisala.

Ti maledice.

Aida:

Ah no! Ah no!

Padre, pietà! Pietà!

Amonasro:

Non sei mia figlia!

Dei Faraoni tu sei la schiava!

Aida:

Padre, a costoro schiava non sono...

Non maledirmi... non imprecarmi.

Ancor tua figlia potrai chiamarmi, della mia patria degna sarò.

Amonasro:

Pensa che un popolo, vinto, straziato, per te soltanto risorger può...

Aida:

O patria! O patria, quanto mi costi!

Amonasro:

Coraggia! Ei giunge... là tutto udrò.

Aida:

Mercy! Mercy! Mercy!

Amonasro:

Rivers of blood will pour on the vanquished cities.

Do you see? From the black gulfs the dead rise, and point to you and cry:

“Because of you your country dies.”

Aida:

Mercy! Mercy, father, mercy!

Amonasro:

A horrible ghost approaches from out of the shadows.

Tremble! The fleshless arms are raised.

It is your mother, recognize her.

She curses you.

Aida:

Ah no! Ah no!

Mercy, mercy! Mercy!

Amonasro:

You are not my daughter!

You are a slave of the Pharaohs!

Aida:

Father, I am not their slave...

Don't curse me..don't reproach me,

You will call me your daughter again.

I will be worthy of my country.

Amonasro:

Think of the people, defeated, torn, who can only rise through you....

Aida:

Oh my country! Oh my country, how much you cost me!

Amonasro:Courage! He arrives.....there I will hear all.
(*Conceals himself among the palm trees*)



Radames:

Pur ti riveggo, mia dolce Aida...

Radames:

To see you again, my sweet Aida...

Aida:

T'arresta, vanne... che sperì ancor?

Aida:

Stop! Go away...what more do you want?

Radames:

A te d'appresso l'amor mi guida.

Radames:

Love has guided me to you.

Aida:

Te i riti attendono d'un altro amor.
D'Amneris sposo...

Aida:

The rites of another love awaits you.
You are Amneris's spouse.

Radames:

Che parli mai?
Te sola, Aida, te deggia amar.
Gli Dei m'ascoltano, tu mia sarai.

Radames:

What did you say?
It is you alone, Aida, whom I love.
The gods have listened, and you will be mine.

Aida:

D'uno spergiuo non ti macchiar!
Prode t'amai, non t'amerei spergiuo.

Aida:

Do not stain yourself by lying!
I loved you proudly, and swore my love.

Radames:

Dell'amor mio dubiti, Aida?

Radames:

Do you doubt my love, Aida?

Aida:

E come sperì sottrarti d'Amneris ai vezzi,
del Re al voler, del tuo popolo ai voti,
dei Sacerdoti all'ira?

Aida:

How do you hope to free yourself from the
love of Amneris, from the King's will, from
the vows of your people, and from the
wrath of the Priests?

Radames:

Odimi, Aida.
Nel fiero anelito di nuova guerra il suolo
Etiopè si ridestò;
i tuoi già invadono la nostra terra,
io degli Egizi duce sarò.
Fra il suon, fra i plausi della vittoria,
al Re mi prostro.

Radames:

Listen to me, Aida.
Ethiopia has awakened with the fierce
yearning for a new war.
Your people already invade our land, and
I will be the Egyptian leader.
Amid the fame and the applause of victory,
I will prostrate myself before the King.

Gli svelo il cor.
Sarai tu il serto della mia gloria,
vivrem beati d'eterno amore.

I will unveil my heart.
You shall be the reward for my glory, and
we will live blessed by eternal love.

Aida:
Nè d'Amneris paventi il vindice furor?
La sua vendetta come folgor tremenda,
cadrà su me, sul padre mio, su tutti.

Aida:
Don't you fear Amneris's vindictive fury?
Her revenge, like a dreadful thunderbolt,
will fall on me, my father, on every one.

Radames:
Io vi difendo.

Radames:
I will defend you.

Aida:
Invan, tu nol potresti.
Pur... se tu m'ami... ancor s'apre una via
di scampo a noi...

Aida:
In vain, you will not be able to.
But...if you love me..there is yet a way of
escape open to us...

Radames:
Quale?

Radames:
Which?

Aida:
Fuggir...

Aida:
To flee!

Radames
Fuggire!

Radames:
To flee!

Aida:
Fuggiam gli ardori inospiti
di queste lande ignude.
Una novella patria al nostro amor si
schiede.

Aida:
We'll flee and leave this bare and blighted
desert,
A new country where our love will be
united.



Là... tra foreste vergini di fiori profumate,
in estasi beate la terra scorderem.

There...among the virgin forests and
fragrant flowers, in blessed ecstasy we'll
forget this land.

Radames:
Sovra una terra estrania teco fuggir dovrei!
Abbandonar la patria, l'are dei nostri Dei!
Il suol dov'io raccolsi di gloria i primi allori.

Radames:
I should flee with you to a faraway land!
Abandon my country where I was
victorious, and the altars of our gods.

Il ciel dei nostri amori come scordar
potrem?

Aida:

Là... tra foreste vergini.....

Radames:

Il ciel dei nostri amori come scordar
potrem?

Aida:

Sotto il mio ciel, più libero l'amor ne fia
concesso;
ivi nel tempio istesso gli stessi Numi
avrem.
Fuggiam, fuggiam!.

Radames:

Abbandonar la patria l'are dei nostri Dei!
Il ciel dei nostri amori come scordar
potrem?

Radames::

Aida!

Aida::

Tu non m'ami... Va!

Radames:

Non t'amo?

Aida:

Va!

Radames:

Mortal giammai né Dio
arse d'amor al par del mio possente.

Aida:

Va... va... t'attende all'ara Amneris...

Radames:

No! Giammai!

How can we forget the skies that ignited
our love?

Aida:

There...among the virgin forests.....

Radames:

How can we forget the skies that ignited
our love?

Aida:

Under my skies, our love is more free and
without concessions,
We'll find the same gods in those same
temples. We will have gods.
Let us flee, flee!.

Radames:

Abandon my country, the altars of our gods.
How can we forget the skies that ignited
our love?

Radames: (hesitating)

Aida!

Aida:

You do not love me. Go!

Radames:

I don't love you?

Aida:

Go!

Radames:

There was never a mortal nor god who
burned with such powerful love.

Aida:

Go...go...Amneris awaits you at the altar..

Radames:

No! Never!

Aida:

Giammai, dicesti?
Allor piombi la scure
su me, sul padre mio...

Radames:

Ah no! Fuggiamo!
Sì, fuggiam da queste mura,
al deserto insiem fuggiamo.
Qui sol regna la sventura.
Là si schiude un ciel d'amor,
i deserti interminati a noi tal amo saranno.
Su noi gli astri brilleranno di più limpido
fulgor.

Aida:

Nella terra avventurata de' miei padri, il
ciel ne attende.
Ivi l'aura è imbalsamata, ivi il suolo è aromi
e fior.
Fresche valli e verdi prati a noi tal amo
saranno.
Su noi gli astri brilleranno
di più limpido fulgor.

Aida e Radames:

Vieni meco, insiem fuggiamo
Questa terra di dolore.
Vieni meco t'amo, t'amo!
A noi duce fia l'amor.

Aida:

Ma dimmi; per qual via eviterem le schiere
degli armati?

Radames:

Il sentier scelto dai nostri a piombar sul
nemico fia deserto fino a domani.

Aida:

E quel sentier?

Radames:

Le gole di Napata...

Aida:

You said never?
Then the axe will fall on me and on my
father...

Radames:

Ah no! Let us flee!
Yes. We'll flee from these walls,
we'll flee to the desert together.
Here only misfortune reigns.
There the heavens open for our love,
the boundless deserts will be nuptial couch.
Upon us the stars will shine with more
limpid brilliance.

Aida:

Heaven awaits us in the adventurous land
of my father.
There the air is perfumed, and the ground
is fragrant with the aroma of flowers.
Fresh valleys and verdant fields shall be
our nuptial couch.
The stars will shine upon us with more
limpid brilliance.

Aida and Radames:

Come with me, together we escape this
land of sadness.
Come with me, I love you, I love you!
Let love be our leader!
(*They go rapidly aside*)

Aida:

But tell me, by what road shall we take to
avoid the armies?

Radames:

The path chosen by our troops to ambush
the enemy will be deserted until tomorrow.

Aida:

And that path?

Radames:

The Napata gorges..
(*Amonasro comes forward*)

Amonasro:

Di Napata le gole!
Ivi saranno i miei.

Radames:

Oh! Chi ci ascolta?

Amonasro:

D'Aida il padre e degli Etiopi il Re.

Radames:

Tu!... Amonasro! Tu! Il Re?...
Numi! Che dissi?
No! Nnon è ver! No! Sogno! Delirio è questo...

Aida:

Ah no! Ti calma, ascoltami...

Amonasro:

A te l'amor d'Aida un soglio innalzerà!.

Aida:

All'amor mio t'affida.

Radames:

Io son disonorato!
Per te tradii la patria!

Aida:

Ti calma!

Amonasro:

No: tu non sei colpevole, era voler del fato.

Radames:

Io son disonorato!

Aida:

Ah no!

Amonasro:

No!

Radames:

Per te tradii la patria!

Amonasro:

The Napata gorges!
There my people shall be!

Radames:

Oh! Who overhears us?

Amonasro:

Aida's father and King of Ethiopia.

Radames:

You! Amonasro! You! The King?
Gods! What did I say?
No! It can't be true! No! A dream! This is delirium..

Aida:

Ah no! Calm yourself and listen to me.

Amonasro:

Aida's love shall raise you to a throne!

Aida:

Trust yourself in our love.

Radames:

I am dishonored!
For you I betrayed my country!

Aida:

Calm yourself!

Amonasro:

No: you are not guilty, it was the will of fate.

Radames:

I am dishonored!

Aida:

Ah no!

Amonasro

No!

Radames:

For you I betrayed my country!

Amonasro:

No: tu non sei colpevole.

Aida:

Ti calma...

Amonasro:

Vien: oltre il Nil ne attendono i prodi a noi devoti.

Là del tuo core i voti coronerà l'amor.

Vieni, vieni, vieni.

Amonasro:

No! You are not guilty.

Aida:

Calm yourself...

Amonasro:

Come! Other proud, devoted and brave men await us beyond the Nile.

There the vows of your heart shall be crowned with love.

Come, come, come.

*(Amneris, Ramphis, Priests and Guards emerge from the temple)***Amneris:**

Traditor!

Amneris:

Traitor!

Aida:

La mia rival!

Aida:

My rival!

Amonasro:

L'opra mia a strugger vieni!

Muori!...

Amonasro:*(rushing upon Amneris with a dagger)*

You come to destroy my work!

Die!

Radames:

Arresta, insano!...

Radames: *(interposing himself)*

Stop, madman!

Amonasro:

O rabbia!

Amonasro:

Oh fury!

Ramfis:

Guardie, olà!

Ramphis:

Guards, here!

Radames:

Presto! Fuggite!

Radames: *(to Aida and Amonasro)*

Quickly. Flee!

Amonasro:

Vieni, o figlia!

Amonasro: *(taking Aida with him)*

Come, oh daughter!

Ramfis:

L'inseguite!

Ramphis: *(to the Guards)*

Follow them!

Radames:

Sacerdote, io resto a te.

Radames: *(to Ramphis)*

Priest! I remain with you.

ACT IV: SCENE 1

A Hall in the King's Palace. There is a large gate which opens on the subterranean hall of judgment; a passage leads to the prison of Radames.

Amneris:

L'abborrita rivale a me sfuggia...
 Dai Sacerdoti Radamès attende
 Dei traditor la pena.
 Traditore egli non è...
 Pur rivelò di guerra l'alto segreto...
 egli fuggir volea...con lei fuggire... traditori
 tutti!
 A morte! A morte!... O! Che mai parlo? Io
 l'amo, Io l'amo sempre...
 Disperato, insano è quest'amor che la mia
 vita strugge.
 O! S'ei potesse amarmi!
 Vorrei salvarlo. E come? Si tenti!
 Guardie: Radamès qui venga.

Amneris:

Già i Sacerdoti adunansi
 arbitri del tuo fato.
 Pur dell'accusa orribile scolpati ancor t'è
 dato;
 Ti scolpa e la tua grazia io pregherò dal
 trono, e nunzia di perdono, sì vita te sarò.

Radames:

Di mie discolpe i giudici mai non urdan
 l'accento.
 Dinanzi ai Numi, agl'uomini, né vil, né reo
 mi sento.
 Profferse il labbro incauto fatal segreto, è
 vero, ma puro il mio pensiero e l'onor mio
 restò.

Amneris:

Salvati dunque e scolpati.

Radames:

No.

Amneris: (*sadly before the gate*)

My abhorred rival escapes me...
 Radames awaits the Priests and the
 punishment of a traitor.
 He is not a traitor..
 But then he revealed a high secret
 he wished to flee...with her...they are all
 traitors!
 To death! To death! Oh! What did I say?
 I love him, I will always love him.
 This love is desperate, insane, and destroys
 my life.
 Oh! If he could love me!
 I would save him. And how? I will try!
 Guards: Bring Radames before me.

(Radames is brought forward)

Amneris:

The Priests have already gathered to judge
 your fate.
 Exculpate yourself of this horrible
 accusation.
 Exculpate yourself and I will beg for grace
 from the throne, and I will be a messenger
 of pardon and life for you.

Radames:

The judges will never hear excuses from
 my voice;
 I feel neither vile nor guilt before men and
 the gods.
 It is true that my incautious lips uttered the
 fatal secret, but my thoughts are pure and
 my honor remains.

Amneris:

Then save and exculpate yourself.

Radames:

No.

Amneris:

Tu morrai.

Radames:

La vita aborro; d'ogni gaudio la fante inaridita.
Svanita ogni speranza, sol bramo di morir.

Amneris:

Morire! Ah! Tu dei vivere!
Sì, all'amor mio vivrai;
Per te le angosce orribili di morte io già
provai;
T'amai... soffersi tanto...
Vegliai le notti in pianto...
e patria, e trono, e vita, tutto darei per te.

Radames:

Per essa anch'io la patria
e l'onor mio tradia...

Amneris:

Di lei non più!

Radames:

L'infamia m'attende e vuoi ch'io viva?
Misero appien mi festi, Aida a me togliesti,
Spenta l'hai forse e in dono offri la vita a
me?

Amneris:

Io, di sua morte origine!
No! Vive Aida!

Radames:

Vive!

Amneris:

Nei disperato anelito dell'orde fuggitive
sol cadde il padre.

Radames:

Ed ella?

Amneris:

Sparve, né più novella s'ebbe...

Amneris:

You will die.

Radames:

I abhor life, its joys and happiness are lost,
Every hope is lost and I only yearn to die.

Amneris:

To die! Ah! You must live!
Yes, you will live for my love;
I have undergone dreadful anguish in my
love for you.
I loved you...suffered so much..
I watched the nights in tears.. I would give
all for you, country, throne, and life.

Radames:

For her, I betrayed my country and my
honor.....

Amneris:

She is no more!

Radames:

Infamy awaits me, and you want me to live?
You have taken Aida from me and made
me utterly miserable. Perhaps you killed
her, and as a gift you offer me life?

Amneris:

I the cause of her death?
No! Aida lives!

Radames:

She lives!

Amneris:

During the desperate struggle of the
fugitives only her father was slain.

Radames:

And she?

Amneris:

She disappeared, and we have no more news.

Radames:

Gli Dei l'adducano salva alle patrie mura,
e ignori la sventura sì chi per lei morrà!

Amneris:

Ma, s'io ti salvo, giurami che più non la
vedrai.

Radames:

No! posso!

Amneris:

A lei rinunzia
per sempre... e tu vivrai!

Radames:

No! posso!

Amneris:

Ancor una volta. A lei rinunzia.

Radames:

È vano.

Amneris:

Morir vuoi dunque, insano?

Radames:

Pronto a morir son già!

Amneris:

Chi ti salva, sciagurato, dalla sorte che
t'aspetta?
In furore hai tu cangiato un amor ch'egual
non ha.
De' miei pianti la vendetta ora il ciel si
compirà.

Radames:

È la morte un ben supremo.
Se per lei morir m'è dato nel subir
l'estremo fato gaudi immensi il cor avrà.
L'ira umana più non temo,
Temo sol la tua pietà.

Radames:

May the gods lead her to safety and her
native walls, ignorant of the misfortune of
the man who died for her.

Amneris:

But, if I save you, swear to me that you
will never see her again.

Radames:

I cannot!

Amneris:

Renounce her forever.....
and you will live!

Radames:

I cannot!

Amneris:

Again, renounce her.

Radames:

It is in vain.

Amneris:

Are you Insane, you want to die?

Radames:

I am already ready to die!

Amneris:

Who will save you, o wretch, from the fate
that awaits you?
In a fury you have changed a love that has
no equal.
Heaven will now exact revenge for my
tears.

Radames:

Death is a supreme blessing.
If I am to die for her, my heart will feel the
greatest joy.
I fear human anger no more,
I only fear your pity.

Amneris:

Ah! Chi ti salva?

De' miei pianti la vendetta or dal ciel si compirà.

Amneris:

Ohimè! Morir mi sento! O! Chi lo salva?

E in poter di costoro

io stessa lo gettai! Ora a te impreco.

Atroce gelosia, che la sua morte
e il lutto eterno del mio cor segnasti!

Ecco i fatali, gl'inesorati ministri di morte!

O! Ch'io non veggia quelle bianche larve!

E in poter di costoro io stessa lo gettai!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Spirito del Nume, sovra noi discendi!

Ne avviva al raggio dell'eterna luce;

Pel labbro nostro tua giustizia apprendi.

Amneris:

Numi, pietà del mio straziato core.

Egli è innocente, lo salvate, o Numi!

Disperato, tremendo è il mio dolore!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Spirito del Nume, sovra noi discendi!

Amneris:

Oh! chi lo salva! Mi sento morir! Ohimè!

Ramfis:

Radamès! Radamès! Radamès!

Tu rivelasti della patria i segreti allo
straniero! Discolpati.

Amneris:

Ah! Who will save you?

Heaven will now exact revenge for my
tears.

(Radames leaves under guard)

Amneris: (falls despairingly)

Alas! I feel myself dying!

Oh! Who will save him?

I myself threw him into their power.

Atrocious jealousy, his death will be the
eternal grief in my heart!

*(She turns and sees the Priests, who
enter the subterranean hall.)*

Here are the fatal inexorable ministers of death!

Oh! That I may not see those white ghosts!

And I myself threw him into their power!

Ramphis, Priests: (from the hall)

Spirit of the gods descend upon us!

Awaken us to the ray of your eternal light:

Make your justice known through our lips.

Amneris:

Gods, mercy on my tortured heart.

He is innocent, save him, oh gods!

My despairing sorrow is tremendous!

*(Radames, between Guards, passes and
descends to the subterranean judgment
hall)*

Ramphis, Priests:

Spirit of the gods descend upon us!

Amneris:

Oh! Who will save him? Alas!

Ramphis:

Radames! Radames! Radames!

You revealed secrets of our country to the
foreigner! Defend yourself!

Sacerdoti:

Discolpati.

Ramfis::

Egli tace.

Ramfis, Sacerdoti::

Traditor!

Amneris:

Ah, pietà! Egli è innocente! Numi, pietà!

Ramfis:

Radames! Radames! Radames!
Tu disertasti dal campo il dì che precedea
la pugna.
Discolpati.

Sacerdoti:

Discolpati.

Ramfis:

Egli tace.

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Traditor!

Amneris:

Ah, pietà! Ah! lo salvate! Numi, pietà!

Ramfis:

Radames! Radames! Radames!
Tu fè violasti alla patria spergiuo, al Re,
all'onore.
Discolpati.

Sacerdoti:

Discolpati.

Ramfis:

Egli tace.

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Traditor!

Amneris:

Ah, pietà! Ah, lo salvate, Numi, pietà!

Priests:

Defend yourself.

Ramphis:

He is silent.

Ramphis, Priests:

Traitor!

Amneris:

Ah, mercy! He is innocent! Gods, mercy!

Ramphis:

Radames! Radames! Radames!
You deserted the camp the day preceding
the battle.
Defend yourself.

Priests:

Defend yourself.

Ramphis:

He is silent.

Ramphis, Priests:

Traitor!

Amneris:

Ah, mercy! Ah! Save him! Gods, mercy!

Ramphis:

Radames! Radames! Radames!
You violated the faith that you swore to
your country, to the King, and to honor.
Defend yourself.

Priests:

Defend yourself.

Ramphis:

He is silent.

Ramphis, Priests:

Traitor!

Amneris:

Ah, mercy! Ah, save him, Gods, mercy!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Radames, è deciso il tuo fato.
Degli infami la morte tu avrai;
sotto l'ara del Nume sdegnato.
A te vivo fia schiuso l'avel.

Amneris:

A lui vivo la tomba! O, gl'infami!
N'e di sangue son paghi giammai.
E si chiaman ministri del ciel!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Traditor! Traditor! Traditor!

Amneris:

Sacerdoti: compiste un delitto!
Tigri infami di sangue assetate.
Voi la terra ed i Numi oltraggiate.
Voi punite chi colpe non ha!

Ramfis:

È traditor!

Sacerdoti:

È traditor!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Morrà!

Amneris:

Sacerdote: quest'uomo che uccidi
tu lo sai, da me un giorno fu amato.
L'anatema d'un core straziato
col suo sangue su te ricadrà!

Ramfis:

È traditor!

Sacerdoti:

È traditor!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Morrà!

Ramphis, Priests:

Radames, your fate is decided.
You shall die like the infamous,
under the altar of the scorned gods.
You will be entombed alive.

Amneris:

Alive in a tomb! Oh, infamy!
They are never satisfied with blood,
and call themselves ministers of heaven!

Ramphis, Priests:

Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!

*Amneris: (Attacking the Priests who
emerge from the subterranean hall)*

Priests: You have committed evil!
Infamous tigers thirsting for blood,
you outrage earth and the gods...
You punish an innocent!

Ramphis:

He is a traitor!

Priests:

He is a traitor!

Ramphis, Priests:

He shall die!

Amneris: (to Ramphis)

Priest: This man you kill,
you know one day was loved by me.
The curse of a broken heart.
His blood will fall upon you!

Ramphis!

He is a traitor!

Priests:

He is a traitor!

Ramphis, Priests:

He shall die!

Amneris:

Voi la terra ed i Numi oltraggiate,
Voi punite chi colpe non ha.
Ah no, non è traditor, pietà!

Ramfis, Sacerdoti:

Morrà!
È traditor! Morrà!
Traditor! Traditor! Traditor!

Amneris:

Empia razza! Anatema su voi!
La vendetta del ciel scenderà!
Anatema su voi!

Amneris:

You outrage earth and the gods.
You punish an innocent!
Ah no, he is not a traitor, mercy!

Ramphis, Priests:

He will die!
He is a traitor! He will die!
Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!

Amneris:

Impious race! A curse on you!
Let heaven's vengeance fall on you!
A curse on you!

ACT IV: SCENE 2

*The scene is divided into two floors, the upper the Interior of the Temple of Vulcan,
the lower a subterranean crypt.*

Radames::

La fatal pietra sovra me si chiuse...
Ecco la tomba mia. Del dì la luce più non
vedrò... Non revedrò più Aida.

Aida, ove sei tu?

Possa tu almeno viver felice e la mia sorte
orrenda sempre ignorar!

Qual gemito! Una larva! Una vision! No!

Forma umana è questa.

Ciel! Aida!

Aida:

Son io.

Radames:

Tu... in questa tomba!

Aida:

Presago il core della tua condanna,
in questa tomba che per te s'apriva
Io penetrar furtiva. E qui lontana da ogni
umano sguardo nelle tue braccia desiai
morire.

Radames:

The fatal stone above me is closed..
This is my tomb. I shall no more see the
light of day. I shall see no more. I shall not
see Aida again.

Aida, Where are you?

May you at least live happily and never
know of my dreadful fate.

A groan! A ghost! A vision..

No! It is a human form.

Heavens! Aida!

Aida:

It is I.

Radames:

You...in this tomb!

Aida:

My heart knew of your sentence to be
condemned into this tomb. I made my
way
here far from all. I yearn to die in your
arms.

Radames:

Morir! Sì pura e bella!
Morir per me d'amore...
Degli anni tuoi nel fiore fuggir la vita!
T'avea il cielo per l'amor creata,
ed io t'uccido per averti amata!
No, non morrai!
Tropo t'amai!
Tropo sei bella!

Aida:

Vedi? Di morte l'angelo
radiante a noi s'appressa.
Ne adduce eterni gaudi sovra i suoi vanni
d'or.
Già veggo il ciel dischiudersi,
ivi ogni affanno cessa.
Ivi comincia l'estasi d'un immortale amor.

Sacerdotesse:

Immenso Fthà, del mondo.
Spirito animator...

Sacerdoti:

Ah!

Aida:

Triste canto!

Radames:

Il tripudio dei Sacerdoti.

Aida:

Il nostro inno di morte.

Radames:

Né le mie forti braccia smuoverti potranno,
o fatal pietra!

Sacerdoti, Sacerdotesse:

Ah! Noi t'invochiamo, t'invochiam.

Aida:

Invan! Tutto è finito sulla terra per noi.

Radames:

To die! So pure and beautiful!
To die for love for me...
in the flower of your youth!
Heaven created you for love,
and I kill you for having loved me!
No, you shall not die!
I loved you too much!
You are too beautiful!

Aida:

Look! The radiant angel of death approaches us.
He takes us under his golden feathers to eternal joys.
Already the heavens open,
and there every grief ceases.
There the ecstasy of an immortal love begins.

Priestesses: (in the temple above)

All-powerful Phthà, spiritual animator of the world.....

Priests:

Ah!

Aida:

A sad song!

Radames:

The jubilation of the Priests.

Aida:

Our hymn of death.

Radames: (trying to move the stone)

My strong arms cannot move the stone, o fatal stone!

Priests, Priestesses:

Ah! We invoke you!, we invoke you.

Aida:

It is in vain. All is over for us on earth.

Radames:

È vero! È vero!

Radames:

It is true! It is true!

Meno mosso



Aida e Radames:

O terra addio addio valle di pianti.
Sogno di gaudio che in dolor svanì.
A noi si schiude il ciel e l'alme erranti
Volano al raggio dell'interno dì.

Aida and Radames:

Farewell earth, farewell valleys of tears.
Dreams of joy that vanish in grief.
Heavens open to us, wandering souls who
fly to the rays of eternal day.

Sacerdoti, Sacerdotesse:

Immenso Fthà, noi t'invochiam!

Priests, Priestesses:

All-powerful Phthà, we invoke you!

Aida e Radames:

Ah! Si schiude il ciel.
O terra addio; addio valli di pianti...

Aida and Radames:

Ah The heavens open.
Farewell earth, farewell valleys of tears.

Amneris:

Pace t'imploro...

Amneris:

*(in the temple above, prostrate on the
stone that closes the vault)*
I pray for peace for you...

Aida e Radames:

Sogno di gaudio che in dolor svanì.

Aida and Radames:

Dreams of joy that vanish in grief.

Amneris:

... salma adorata.

Amneris:

.....adored corpse.

Aida e Radames:

A noi si schiude il ciel...

Aida and Radames:

The heavens open for us.

Amneris:

Isi placata...

Amneris:

Isis is appeased.

Aida e Radames:

Si schiude il ciel e l'alme erranti...

Aida and Radames:

The heavens open for wandering souls.

Amneris:

Isi placata ti schiuda il ciel!

Amneris:

Isis is appeased and the heavens open!

Aida e Radames:

Volano al raggio dell'eterno dì.

Sacerdoti e Sacerdotesse:

Noi t'invochiam...

Aida e Radames:

Il ciel...

Sacerdoti e Sacerdotesse:

Immenso Fthà!

Aida e Radames:

Si schiude il ciel!

Amneris:

Pace t'imploro, ... pace, pace..... pace!

Sacerdoti, Sacerdotesse:

Immenso Fthà!

FINE

Aida and Radames:

Wandering souls who fly to the rays of eternal day.

Priests and Priestesses:

We invoke you...

Aida and Radames:

Heaven.

Priests and Priestesses:

All-powerful Phthà!

Aida and Radames:

Heaven opens!

(Aida falls and dies in Radames's arms)

Amneris:

I pray for peace, ...peace, peace, peace!

Priests, Priestesses:

All-powerful Phthà!

THE END

AIDA

Discography

- 1928 Giannini (Aida); Pertile (Radames); Minghini-Cattaneo (Amneris);
Inghilleri (Amonasro); Manfrini (Ramphis); Masini (Pharaoh);
La Scala Chorus and Orchestra;
Sabajno (Conductor)
- 1928 Arangi-Lombardi (Aida); Lindi (Radames); Capuana (Amneris);
Borgioli (Amonasro); Pasero (Ramphis); Baccaloni (Pharaoh);
La Scala Chorus, Milan Symphony Orchestra;
Molajoli (Conductor)
- 1946 Caniglia (Aida); Gigli (Radames); Stignani (Amneris); Becchi (Amonasro);
Pasero (Ramphis); Tajo (Pharaoh);
Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Serafin (Conductor)
- 1949 Nelli (Aida); Tuckers (Radames); Gustavson (Amneris); Valdengo
Amonasro); Scott (Ramphis); Harbour (Pharaoh);
Shaw Chorale and NBC Symphony;
Toscanini (Conductor)
- 1951 Mancini (Aida); Filippeschi (Radames); Simionato (Amneris);
Panerai (Amonasro); Neri (Ramphis); Massaria (Pharaoh);
RAI Radio Chorus and Orchestra;
Gui (Conductor)
- 1951 Callas (Aida); Del Monaco (Radames); Dominguez (Amneris);
Taddei (Amonasro);
Palacio de Bellas Artes Chorus and Orchestra;
Fabritiis (Conductor)
- 1952 Tebaldi (Aida); Del Monaco (Radames); Stignani (Amneris);
Protti (Amonasro); Caselli (Ramphis) Corena (Pharaoh);
Santa Cecilia Academy Chorus and Orchestra;
Erede (Conductor)
- 1952 Roman (Aida); Sarri (Radames); Sawyer (Amneris);
Manca Serra (Amonasro);
Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Paoletti (Conductor)

- 1954 Sokolova (Aida); Nelepp (Radames); Davidova (Amneris);
Lisitsian (Amonasro);
Bolshoi Theatre Chorus and Orchestra;
Melik-Paskaev (Conductor)
- 1955 Milanov (Aida) Björling (Radames); Barbieri (Amneris);
Warren (Amonasro); Christoff (Ramphis); Clabassi (Pharaoh);
Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Perlea (Conductor)
- 1955 Curtis Verna (Aida); Borsò (Radames); Dominguez (Amneris);
Bastianini (Amonasro); Scott (Ramphis);
La Fenice Chorus and Orchestra;
Capuana (Conductor)
- 1955 Callas (Aida); Tucker (Radames); Barbieri (Amneris); Gobbi (Amonasro);
Modesti (Ramphis); Zaccaria (Pharaoh);
La Scala Chorus and Orchestra;
Serafin (Conductor)
- 1956 Curtis Verna (Aida); Corelli (Radames); Pirazzini (Amneris);
Guelfi (Amonasro); Neri (Ramphis); Zerbini (Pharaoh);
Turin Radio Chorus and Orchestra;
Questa (Conductor)
- 1959 Tebaldi (Aida); Bergonzi (Radames); Simionato (Amneris);
MacNeil (Amonasro); Van Mill (Ramphis); Corena (Pharaoh);
Vienna Singverein and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra;
Von Karajan (Conductor)
- 1961 Price (Aida); Vickers (Radames); Gorr (Amneris); Merrill (Amonasro);
Tozzi (Ramphis); Clabassi (Pharaoh);
Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Solti (Conductor)
- 1967 Nilsson (Aida); Corelli (Radames); Bumbry (Amneris);
Sereni (Amonasro); Gaiotti (Ramphis); Mazzoli (Pharaoh);
Rome Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Mehta (Conductor)

- 1970 Price (Aida); Domingo (Radames); Bumbry (Amneris);
Milnes (Amonasro); Raimondi (Ramphis); Sotin (Pharaoh);
Alldis Choir and London Symphony Orchestra;
Leinsdorf (Conductor)
- 1974 Caballé (Aida); Domingo (Radames); Cossotto (Amneris);
Cappuccilli (Amonasro); Ghjarov (Ramphis); Roni (Pharaoh);
Royal Opera House Chorus, New Philharmonia;
Muti (Conductor)
- 1976 Cruz-Romo (aida); Gougalov (Radames); Bumbry (Amneris);
Wixell (Amonasro); Ferrin (Ramphis); Roni (Pharaoh);
Turin Lyric Theatre Chorus and Orchestra;
Schippers (Conductor)
- 1979 Freni (Aida); Carreras (Radames); Baltsa (Amneris); Cappuccilli (Amonasro);
Raimondi (Ramphis); Van Dam (Pharaoh);
Vienna State Opera Chorus, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra;
Von Karajan (Conductor)
- 1981 Ricciarelli (Aida); Domingo (Radames); Obratzsova (Amneris);
Nucci (Amonasro); Ghjarov (Tamphis); Raimondi (Pharaoh);
La Scala Chorus and Orchestra;
Abbado (Conductor)
- 1986 Chiara (Aida); Pavarotti (Radames); Dimitrova (Amneris); Nucci
(Amonasro); Burchuladze (Ramphis); Roni (Pharaoh);
Las Scala Chorus and Orchestra;
Maazel (Conductor)
- 1990 Millo (Aida); Domingo (Radames); Zajick (Amneris); Ramey (Ramphis);
Cook (Pharaoh);
Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Levine (Conductor)

AIDA

Videography

Castle VHS:

Chiara (Aida); Martinucci (Radames); Cossotto (Amneris);
Sandola (Amonasro); Zardo (Ramphis); Zanazzo (Pharaoh);
Verona Arena Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Guadagno (Conductor)
Large (Video Director)

DGG:

Millo (Aida); Domingo (Radames); Zajick (Amneris);
Milnes (Amonasro) Burchuladze (Ramphis); Kavrakos (Pharaoh);
Metropolitan Opera Chorus and Orchestra;
Levine (Conductor);
Frisell (Director);
Large (Video Director)

Virgin VHS:

Chiara (Aida); Pavarotti (Radames); Dimitrova (Amneris);
Pons (Amonasro); Ghiaiov (Ramphis); Burchuladze (Pharaoh);
La Scala Chorus and Orchestra;
Maazel (Conductor);
Ronconi (Director);
Bailey (Video Director)

RCA VHS:

Nelli (Aida); Tucker (Radames); Gustavson (Amneris);
Valdengo (Amonasro); Scott (Ramphis); Harbour (Pharaoh);
Robert Shaw Chorale and NBC Orchestra;
Toscanini (Conductor)

DICTIONARY OF OPERA AND MUSICAL TERMS

Accelerando - Play the music faster, but gradually.

Adagio - At slow or gliding tempo, not as slow as Largo, but not as fast as Andante.

Agitato - Restless or agitated.

Allegro - At a brisk or lively tempo, faster than Andante but not as fast as Presto.

Andante - A moderately slow, easy-going tempo.

Appoggiatura - An extra or embellishing note preceding a main melodic note or tone. Usually written as a note of smaller size, it shares the time value of the main note.

Arabesque - Flourishes or fancy patterns usually applying to vocal virtuosity.

Aria - A solo song usually structured in a formal pattern. Arias generally convey reflective and introspective thoughts rather than descriptive action.

Arietta - A shortened form of aria.

Arioso - A musical passage or composition having a mixture of free recitative and metrical song.

Arpeggio - Producing the tones of a chord in succession but not simultaneously.

Atonal - Music that is not anchored in traditional musical tonality; it uses the chromatic scale impartially, does not use the diatonic scale and has no keynote or tonal center.

Ballad Opera - 18th century English opera consisting of spoken dialogue and music derived from popular ballad and folksong sources. The most famous is *The Beggar's Opera* which was a satire of the Italian opera seria.

Bar - A vertical line across the staff that divides the music into units.

Baritone - A male singing voice ranging between the bass and tenor.

Baroque - A style of artistic expression prevalent in the 17th century that is marked generally by the use of complex forms, bold ornamentation, and florid decoration. The Baroque period extends from approximately 1600 to 1750 and includes the works of the original creators of modern opera, the Camerata, as well as the later works by Bach and Handel.

Bass - The lowest male voices, usually divided into categories such as:

Basso buffo - A bass voice that specializes in comic roles like Dr. Bartolo in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*.

Basso cantante - A bass voice that demonstrates melodic singing quality rather than comic or tragic: King Philip in Verdi's *Don Carlos*.

Basso profondo - the deepest, most profound, or most dramatic of bass voices: Sarastro in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Bel canto - Literally "beautiful singing." It originated in Italian opera of the 17th and 18th centuries and stressed beautiful tones produced with ease, clarity, purity, evenness, together with an agile vocal technique and virtuosity. Bel canto flourished in the first half of the 19th century in the works of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti.

Cabaletta - Typically a lively bravura extension of an aria or duet that creates a climax. The term is derived from the Italian word "cavallo," or horse: it metaphorically describes a horse galloping to the finish line.

Cadenza - A flourish or brilliant part of an aria commonly inserted just before a finale.

Camerata - A gathering of Florentine writers and musicians between 1590 and 1600 who attempted to recreate what they believed was the ancient Greek theatrical synthesis of drama, music, and stage spectacle; their experimentation led to the creation of the early structural forms of modern opera.

Cantabile - An expression indication urging the singer to sing sweetly.

Cantata - A choral piece generally containing Scriptural narrative texts: Bach Cantatas.

Cantilena - A lyrical melodic line meant to be played or sung "cantabile," or with sweetness and expression.

Canzone - A short, lyrical operatic song usually containing no narrative association with the drama but rather simply reflecting the character's state of mind: Cherubino's "Voi che sapete" in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Shorter versions are called canzonettas.

Castrato - A young male singer who was surgically castrated to retain his treble voice.

Cavatina - A short aria popular in the 18th century without the da capo repeat section.

Classical Period - The period between the Baroque and Romantic periods. The Classical period is generally considered to have begun with the birth of Mozart (1756) and ended with Beethoven's death (1830). Stylistically, the music of the period stressed clarity, precision, and rigid structural forms.

Coda - A trailer or tailpiece added on by the composer after the music's natural conclusion.

Coloratura - Literally colored: it refers to a soprano singing in the bel canto tradition with great agility, virtuosity, embellishments and ornamentation: Joan Sutherland singing in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

Commedia dell'arte - A popular form of dramatic presentation originating in Renaissance Italy in which highly stylized characters were involved in comic plots involving mistaken identities and misunderstandings. The standard characters were Harlequin and Colombine: The "play within a play" in Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*.

Comprimario - A singer portraying secondary character roles such as confidantes, servants, and messengers.

Continuo - A bass part (as for a keyboard or stringed instrument) that was used especially in baroque ensemble music; it consists of a succession of bass notes with figures that indicate the required chords. Also called *figured bass*, *thoroughbass*.

Contralto - The lowest female voice derived from "contra" against, and "alto" voice, a voice between the tenor and mezzo-soprano.

Countertenor, or male alto vocal range - A high male voice generally singing within the female high soprano ranges.

Counterpoint - The combination of one or more independent melodies added into a single harmonic texture in which each retains its linear character: polyphony. The most sophisticated form of counterpoint is the fugue form in which up to 6 to 8 voices are combined, each providing a variation on the basic theme but each retaining its relation to the whole.

Crescendo - A gradual increase in the volume of a musical passage.

Da capo - Literally "from the top": repeat. Early 17th century da capo arias were in the form of A B A, the last A section repeating the first A section.

Deus ex machina - Literally "god out of a machine." A dramatic technique in which a person or thing appears or is introduced suddenly and unexpectedly; it provides a contrived solution to an apparently insoluble dramatic difficulty.

Diatonic - Relating to a major or minor musical scale that comprises intervals of five whole steps and two half steps.

Diminuendo - Gradually getting softer, the opposite of crescendo.

Dissonance - A mingling of discordant sounds that do not harmonize within the diatonic scale.

Diva - Literally a “goddess”; generally refers to a female opera star who either possesses, or pretends to possess, great rank.

Dominant - The fifth tone of the diatonic scale: in the key of C, the dominant is G.

Dramma giocoso - Literally meaning amusing, or lighthearted. Like tragicomedy it represents an opera whose story combines both serious and comic elements: Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.

Falsetto - Literally a lighter or “false” voice; an artificially produced high singing voice that extends above the range of the full voice.

Fioritura - Literally “flower”; a flowering ornamentation or embellishment of the vocal line within an aria.

Forte, Fortissimo - Forte (*f*) means loud: mezzo forte (*mf*) is fairly loud; fortissimo (*ff*) even louder, and additional *fff*’s indicate greater degrees of loudness.

Glissando - A rapid sliding up or down the scale.

Grand Opera - An opera in which there is no spoken dialogue and the entire text is set to music, frequently treating serious and dramatic subjects. Grand Opera flourished in France in the 19th century (Meyerbeer) and most notably by Verdi (*Aida*): the genre is epic in scale and combines spectacle, large choruses, scenery, and huge orchestras.

Heldentenor - A tenor with a powerful dramatic voice who possesses brilliant top notes and vocal stamina. Heldentenors are well suited to heroic (Wagnerian) roles: Lauritz Melchior in Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*.

Imbroglia - Literally “Intrigue”; an operatic scene with chaos and confusion and appropriate diverse melodies and rhythms.

Largo or larghetto - Largo indicates a very slow tempo; Larghetto is slightly faster than Largo.

Legato - Literally “tied”; therefore, successive tones that are connected smoothly. Opposing Legato would be Marcato (strongly accented and punctuated) and Staccato (short and aggressive).

Leitmotif - A short musical passage attached to a person, thing, feeling, or idea that provides associations when it recurs or is recalled.

Libretto - Literally “little book”; the text of an opera. On Broadway, the text of songs is called “lyrics” but the spoken text in the play is called the “book.”

Lied - A German song; the plural is “lieder.” Originally German art songs of the 19th century.

Light opera, or operetta - Operas that contain comic elements but light romantic plots: Johann Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus*.

Maestro - From the Italian “master”: a term of respect to conductors, composers, directors, and great musicians.

Melodrama - Words spoken over music. Melodrama appears in Beethoven’s *Fidelio* but flourished during the late 19th century in the operas of Massenet (*Manon*). Melodrama should not be confused with melodrama when it describes a work that is characterized by extravagant theatricality and by the predominance of plot and physical action over characterization.

Mezza voce - Literally “medium voice,” or singing with medium or half volume; it is generally intended as a vocal means to intensify emotion.

Mezzo-soprano - A woman’s voice with a range between that of the soprano and contralto.

Molto - Very. Molto agitato means very agitated.

Obbligato - An elaborate accompaniment to a solo or principal melody that is usually played by a single instrument.

Octave - A musical interval embracing eight diatonic degrees: therefore, from C to C is an octave.

Opera - Literally “a work”; a dramatic or comic play combining music.

Opera buffa - Italian comic opera that flourished during the bel canto era. Buffo characters were usually basses singing patter songs: Dr. Bartolo in Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, and Dr. Dulcamara in Donizetti’s *The Elixir of Love*.

Opéra comique - A French opera characterized by spoken dialogue interspersed between the arias and ensemble numbers, as opposed to Grand Opera in which there is no spoken dialogue.

Operetta, or light opera - Operas that contain comic elements but tend to be more romantic: Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Offenbach's *La Périchole*, and Lehar's *The Merry Widow*. In operettas, there is usually much spoken dialogue, dancing, practical jokes, and mistaken identities.

Oratorio - A lengthy choral work, usually of a religious or philosophical nature and consisting chiefly of recitatives, arias, and choruses but in deference to its content, performed without action or scenery: Handel's *Messiah*.

Ornamentation - Extra embellishing notes—appoggiaturas, trills, roulades, or cadenzas—that enhance a melodic line.

Overture - The orchestral introduction to a musical dramatic work that frequently incorporates musical themes within the work.

Parlando - Literally “speaking”; the imitation of speech while singing, or singing that is almost speaking over the music. It is usually short and with minimal orchestral accompaniment.

Patter - Words rapidly and quickly delivered. Figaro's Largo in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* is a patter song.

Pentatonic - A five-note scale, like the black notes within an octave on the piano.

Piano - Soft volume.

Pitch - The property of a musical tone that is determined by the frequency of the waves producing it.

Pizzicato - A passage played by plucking the strings instead of stroking the string with the bow.

Polyphony - Literally “many voices.” A style of musical composition in which two or more independent melodies are juxtaposed in harmony; counterpoint.

Polytonal - The use of several tonal schemes simultaneously.

Portamento - A continuous gliding movement from one tone to another.

Prelude - An orchestral introduction to an act or the whole opera. An Overture can appear only at the beginning of an opera.

Presto, Prestissimo - Very fast and vigorous.

Prima Donna - The female star of an opera cast. Although the term was initially used to differentiate between the dramatic and vocal importance of a singer, today it generally describes the personality of a singer rather than her importance in the particular opera.

Prologue - A piece sung before the curtain goes up on the opera proper: Tonio's Prologue in Leoncavallo's *IPagliacci*.

Quaver - An eighth note.

Range - The divisions of the voice: soprano, mezzo-soprano, contralto, tenor, baritone, and bass.

Recitative - A formal device that advances the plot. It is usually a rhythmically free vocal style that imitates the natural inflections of speech; it represents the dialogue and narrative in operas and oratorios. Secco recitative is accompanied by harpsichord and sometimes with cello or continuo instruments and *accompagnato* indicates that the recitative is accompanied by the orchestra.

Ritornello - A short recurrent instrumental passage between elements of a vocal composition.

Romanza - A solo song that is usually sentimental; it is usually shorter and less complex than an aria and rarely deals with terror, rage, and anger.

Romantic Period - The period generally beginning with the raiding of the Bastille (1789) and the last revolutions and uprisings in Europe (1848). Romanticists generally found inspiration in nature and man. Beethoven's *Fidelio* (1805) is considered the first Romantic opera, followed by the works of Verdi and Wagner.

Roulade - A florid vocal embellishment sung to one syllable.

Rubato - Literally "robbed"; it is a fluctuation of tempo within a musical phrase, often against a rhythmically steady accompaniment.

Secco - The accompaniment for recitative played by the harpsichord and sometimes continuo instruments.

Semitone - A half-step, the smallest distance between two notes. In the key of C, the notes are E and F, and B and C.

Serial music - Music based on a series of tones in a chosen pattern without regard for traditional tonality.

Sforzando - Sudden loudness and force; it must stick out from the texture and provide a shock.

Singspiel - Early German musical drama employing spoken dialogue between songs: Mozart's *The Magic Flute*.

Soprano - The highest range of the female voice ranging from lyric (light and graceful quality) to dramatic (fuller and heavier in tone).

Sotto voce - Literally "below the voice"; sung softly between a whisper and a quiet conversational tone.

Soubrette - A soprano who sings supporting roles in comic opera: Adele in Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, or Despina in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

Spinto - From the Italian "spingere" (to push); a soprano having lyric vocal qualities who "pushes" the voice to achieve heavier dramatic qualities.

Speechstimme - Literally "speak voice." The singer half sings a note and half speaks; the declamation sounds like speaking but the duration of pitch makes it seem almost like singing.

Staccato - Short, clipped, rapid articulation; the opposite of the caressing effects of legato.

Stretto - A concluding passage performed in a quicker tempo to create a musical climax.

Strophe - Music repeated for each verse of an aria.

Syncopation - Shifting the beat forward or back from its usual place in the bar; it is a temporary displacement of the regular metrical accent in music caused typically by stressing the weak beat.

Supernumerary - A "super"; a performer with a non-singing role: "Spear-carrier."

Tempo - Time, or speed. The ranges are Largo for very slow to Presto for very fast.

Tenor - Highest natural male voice.

Tessitura - The general range of a melody or voice part; but specifically, the part of the register in which most of the tones of a melody or voice part lie.

Tonality - The organization of all the tones and harmonies of a piece of music in relation to a tonic (the first tone of its scale).

Tone Poem - An orchestral piece with a program; a script.

Tonic - The keynote of the key in which a piece is written. C is the tonic of C major.

Trill - Two adjacent notes rapidly and repeatedly alternated.

Tutti - All together.

Twelve tone - The 12 chromatic tones of the octave placed in a chosen fixed order and constituting with some permitted permutations and derivations the melodic and harmonic material of a serial musical piece. Each note of the chromatic scale is used as part of the melody before any other note gets repeated.

Verismo - Literally “truth”; the artistic use of contemporary everyday material in preference to the heroic or legendary in opera. A movement from the late 19th century: *Carmen*.

Vibrato - A “vibration”; a slightly tremulous effect imparted to vocal or instrumental tone for added warmth and expressiveness by slight and rapid variations in pitch.

