



AIDA

Music by Giuseppe Verdi: Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni

Sung in Italian with English super titles

Family Information: No inappropriate language or moral situations, but ethical circumstances that have consequences. AIDA takes place in Memphis and Thebes in ancient Egypt during the dynasty of the pharaohs, a legend of love, jealousy, and conquest.

Story in Four Acts

ACT ONE

Aida, daughter of Amonasro, King of Ethiopia, has been captured by the Egyptians and has been made a slave to the Pharaoh's daughter, Amneris; although her captors are unaware she is the Princess of Ethiopia. She falls in love with a young soldier Radames, and he with her. Ramfis, the high priest, informs Radames, who is the captain of the guard, that Ethiopia is invading the Nile Valley. Radames hopes that the goddess Isis will choose him to lead the Egyptian army, believing that as victor over Ethiopia he will free his secret love, Aida, the Ethiopian slave. Amneris also loves Radames and suspects his love for Aida. Radames is appointed leader of the Egyptian army, and he leads his men against the Ethiopian army. Amneris is echoed by her people as she cries, "Return Victorious!" Aida is shocked at her feelings, and conflict of loyalties, for now her love will be engaged in battle with her father. Ritual dances are performed to keep Egypt safe in the Temple of Vulcan.

ACT TWO

The Egyptian army triumphs. While awaiting Radames return, Amneris is prepared by her slaves for the celebration. In an attempt to determine if Aida does indeed love Radames, Amneris tells her slave that he was slain in battle. Aida's sorrowful response reveals her secret love. Amneris then threatens her, warning Aida to keep her place as a slave and ignore her feelings for Radames. Aida nearly confesses her royal identity, but instead, pleads for mercy. As Radames returns, a parade and dances celebrate the success of Egypt. Radames is crowned victor by Amneris and his captives are led in, among them Aida's father, Amonasro, disguised as an officer. He warns Aida not to give away his royal identity, and proceeds to plead for mercy for the lives of his fellow people. Ramfis and the priests suggest killing the captives, but Radames asks for the captives' freedom to be his reward. Ramfis suggests that all but Aida's father be released. The King then gives Radames the hand of Amneris as his reward for victory.

ACT THREE

Amneris is led by Ramfis to a temple of Isis on the bank of the Nile to receive the goddess' blessing on the eve of her wedding. Her face veiled, Aida enters to wait in secrecy for Radames. She finds herself caught up in nostalgic thoughts as she longs for her conquered homeland. Her father, who has learned of her love for Radames, encourages her to betray Radames by tricking him into revealing the intended route of the Egyptian army's entry into Ethiopia. She attempts to decline, but finally agrees as he scolds her loyalties and reminds her of what the Egyptians have done to her beloved homeland. Unaware of Amonasro's presence, Radames appears to Aida, declaring that he will marry her after his next victory. She instead insists they run away together to Ethiopia, and asks which route they will take. Upon hearing the Egyptian plan, Amonasro shows himself and declares that he is actually the King of Ethiopia. Radames is horrified by his unwilling act of treason, while Aida and Amonasro try to convince him that it was fate's doing. Amneris leaves the temple and discovers them, declaring Radames a traitor. Amonasro lunges at Amneris with a drawn dagger, but is stopped by Radames who urges him and Aida to escape as he surrenders himself.

ACT FOUR

Radames is sent to the temple of judgment where Amneris offers him a chance to save himself. She will plead for him if will forsake Aida, yet he refuses, preferring death. Amneris listens as the priests ask him three times to defend himself. Radames refuses to answer and is condemned to death. Amneris, appalled at the consequences of her jealousy, declares that their need for revenge has killed an innocent man. Buried alive in a tomb beneath the temple, Radames' last thoughts are of Aida, when suddenly she appears, having slipped in earlier to share his fate. Radames fails at a final attempt to remove the stone holding them in the chamber, and, resigned to their fate, the lovers bid farewell to the earth. Radames faces death with Aida, while above, Amneris, broken-hearted, prays for peace.

Famous Numbers:

"Celeste Aida"	(Heavenly Aida)
"Ohime! Di Guerra fremere"	(Alas! The Cry of War I Hear)
"Su! del Nilo!"	(Nilus' Sacred Shores!)
"Ritorna Vincitor!"	(Return Victorious!)
"I sacri nomi"	(The sacred Names)
"Chi mai fra"	(His Glory Now Praise)
"Fu la sorte degli armi"	(Neath the Chances of Battle)
"Ebben qual nuovo frimito"	(What New Alarm?)
"O tu che sei d'Osiride"	(Oh, Thou Who Art Osiris)
"O patria mia"	(My Native Land)
"Rivedrai le foreste imbalsamate"	(Thou Shalt See Again the Balmy Forests)
"Sacerdote, io resto a te" (Priests a Crime You Have Enacted)	
"La fatal pietra"	(The Fatal Stone)
"O terra addio"	(Farewell O Earth!)

Educational and Artistic Value of *Aida*

By Pamela Gee,

Opera by Children Education Associate

Aida's story seems at first glance a matter of circumstances, one of change of fortune and position. However, Aida is the catalyst for many decisions and manipulations that occur among the supporting characters even though she is in the role of a subservient slave. It could be her royal upbringing that enables her in the end to control her own fate. Each of the main characters demonstrates the duplicity of the heart and its consequences. When one is deeply passionate not only for the one you love but also for your homeland, family, and beliefs, those very ideals can be at odds with each other. Aida may have remained true to her status and responsibility in her role in society had events not demanded her heart change.

Aida, having been captured and enslaved by the Egyptians, would never have supposed to fall in love with an Egyptian guard as a true Ethiopian princess. However, circumstances take her life out of context and set her in the midst of Egyptian society. She is enslaved to an Egyptian princess, Amneris, but in reality is born of equal station in her own society. Radames, whom both women have fallen in love with, though not born to a high position, has strong aims and ambitions. His love for country and love for Aida combine in his hope to become the war leader (unknowingly against Aida's own people) in hopes to achieve glory for his country and the right to request her freedom and hand in marriage. He is blind to the fact, or chooses to ignore, that the position holds other responsibilities until it is too late. Pharaoh gives him his daughter's hand in marriage—a just reward for conquering a threatening nation. Amneris reveals a heart not only full of love but of hate and jealousy. She forces Aida to reveal her inner turbulence and love in a cruel manner. Aida's position is further complicated once her father is captured and pleads for her assistance in saving her country by using her relationship with Radames as a means to reveal information which may secure her country's freedom.

The intertwining themes of love, jealousy, ambition, and loyalty, determine each character's outcome. Though Aida is in fact trapped in her position as a slave and dependant on others to free her, she has power over her own outcome in love and loyalty. Her action to deceive Radames results in his sentence to death as it appears she chooses loyalty to her father and love for her homeland over her love for Radames. Amneris has the power to free Radames. She chooses to allow Radames to be taken to his death because her jealousy and hate overcome her love. Aida, conversely, finds a way to reconcile her actions and her happiness by joining her love in his fate. Thus she reconciles loyalty to family and country, hate and jealousy, with love.

The opera takes poetic license on many cultural aspects of Egyptian culture to tell its story but it carries the magnificence of Egypt. One example, a pharaoh always leads his army into battle, but having Radames do it is essential to the telling of this story. The music emphasizes the cultural aspects of Egypt and its conquering might. The music magnifies the emotion and grandeur of all its elements. The opera and the themes it explores are found to be educational and hold artistic and intrinsic value and when combined make your soul sing.

For great information on Egypt and Aida visit The Kennedy Center's ArtsEdge, an internet arts education program on the internet, for a lesson plan and brief Egyptian study guide. Find it with the address provided below:

<http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2374/>