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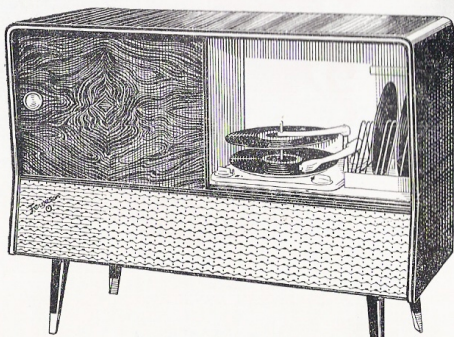


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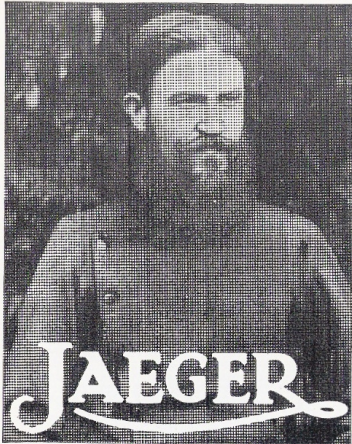
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AIDA

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Tuesday, 8th July, 1958

The 298th performance at the Royal Opera House
of*

AIDA

OPERA IN FOUR ACTS

Scenario by F. A. F. Mariette
Words by C. du Locle translated into Italian verse
by Antonio Ghislanzoni
Music by Giuseppe Verdi
(Property of G. Ricordi & Co.)
Scenery and costumes by Salvatore Fiume
Choreography by Margherita Wallmann
Lighting by John Sullivan

CONDUCTOR — RAFAEL KUBELIK

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THE COVENT GARDEN OPERA CHORUS
Chorus Master - DOUGLAS ROBINSON

THE COVENT GARDEN ORCHESTRA
Leader - CHARLES TAYLOR

GIUSEPPE VERDI, 1813—1901

Aida was commissioned by Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt for the Italian Theatre at Cairo. It was first performed there on 24th December, 1871, not as is sometimes stated for the opening of the Suez Canal (that was in November, 1869), with Antonietta Anastasi-Pozzoni as Aida, Eleonora Grossi as Amneris, Pietro Mongini as Radames, Francesco Steller as Amonasro, Paolo Medini as Ramfis, and Tommaso Costa as the King; Giovanni Bottesini was the conductor. The opera was first performed at the Scala, Milan the following February with Stolz, Waldmann, Fancelli, Pandolfini, Maini, conductor Verdi. The first performance in England was at Covent Garden on 22nd June, 1876, with Adelina Patti in the title role, Mme. Gindèle as Amneris, Ernest Nicolini as Radames, Francesco Graziani as Amonasro, Sgr. Capponi as Ramfis, Enrico Bevnignani was the conductor. The performance in English was at Her Majesty's Theatre on 19th February, 1880, with Minnie Hauk, J. Yorke, Joseph Maas, Mr. Ludwig and Mr. Conly, conductor Alberto Randegger. The opera has been one of the most popular in the Covent Garden repertory since it was first performed. Famous Aidas in this house have included Lillian Nordica, Emma Eames, Emmy Destinn, Elisabeth Rethberg, Dusolina Giannini, Eva Turner, Gina Cigna and Maria Caniglia. Radames has been sung by Jean de Reszke, Francesco Tamagno, Enrico Caruso, Giovanni Zenatello, Giovanni Martinelli, Aureliano Pertile, Giacomo Lauri-Volpi, and Beniamino Gigli; and Amneris by Louise Homer, Louise Kirkby Lunn, Sigrid Onegin, Irene Minghini Cattaneo, Gertrude Wettergren and Ebe Stignani.

* (amended figure after recent researches)

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

RAMFIS, the High Priest	...	MICHAEL LANGDON
RADAMES, Captain of the Guards	...	CARLOS GUICHANDUT
AMNERIS, the King's daughter	...	BLANCHE THEBOM
AIDA, the slave of Amneris	...	LEONTYNE PRICE
THE KING	...	JOSEPH ROULEAU
A MESSENGER	...	DAVID ALLEN
A PRIESTESS	...	JOAN CARLYLE
AMONASRO, King of Ethiopia	...	JOHN SHAW
SOLO DANCERS	...	CLARE MILLAR, ROBERT DE WARREN

THE COVENT GARDEN OPERA BALLET
under the direction of HAROLD TURNER
Ballet Mistress - ROMAYNE AUSTIN

HISTORICAL NOTE

It was Camille Du Locle, librettist of *Don Carlo* and friend of the composer, who succeeded in interesting Verdi in the story of ancient Egypt. Du Locle had himself been fascinated by ancient Egyptian history and had been given a short novel written by his friend the famous Egyptologist Auguste Mariette. Mariette had been created a Bey by Khedive Ismail Pasha for his archeological work in Egypt, and he thought that his novel might make an excellent subject for the opera that was to open the wonderful new opera house in Cairo, built by the Khedive. The latter agreed with Mariette's proposal who gave his novel to Du Locle, instructing him to try and interest Verdi, Wagner or Gounod in the story.

Du Locle naturally hoped that Verdi would accept the libretto, but he did not place his hopes too high, for Verdi had already been invited by the Khedive to compose an opera for the Cairo opening, and had refused. However he proceeded with caution and tact, and when Verdi eventually was sent the outline of Mariette's novel he was most enthusiastic. Verdi and Du Locle worked together and produced a scenario, from which the latter produced a libretto in French prose. This was given to Antonio Ghislanzoni to translate into Italian verse. The première was planned to take place in January 1871, and Verdi, who had only begun composition in July 1870, had the opera almost completed by the November of that year.

Unfortunately the Franco-Prussian war delayed the première, for the scenery and costumes which had been designed and constructed in Paris could not be sent to Cairo from the besieged French capital. The première eventually took place on Christmas Eve, 1871.

The actual story of the opera is pure fiction and the precise historical background against which the story is told is a matter of conjecture. The King is never mentioned by name, and the historical events are not easily identified. It has been assumed however by specialists that the period was that of the Nineteenth Dynasty, and the King was Ramses III, who reigned about 1230 B.C.

AIDA

ACT I

SCENE I. BEFORE THE PALACE OF THE PHARAOHS AT MEMPHIS.

Radames, a young captain of the Egyptian guard, learns from the High Priest, Ramfis, that the Ethiopians are threatening the Nile Valley, and that the goddess Isis will name a new leader for the armies of Egypt. Radames hopes that he may be chosen, so that he may win the hand of Aida, the Ethiopian slave girl of Amneris, the King's daughter. Left alone he expresses his wishes in the aria *Celeste Aida*.

Amneris, who herself is in love with Radames, interrupts his reverie and questions him about his feelings. They are soon joined by Aida, who is the daughter of Amonasro, King of Ethiopia. Her identity is not known to her captors. Amneris feigns friendship with Aida, but is really intensely jealous of her.

Trumpets sound and the King and his ministers enter to announce the name of the new leader chosen by Isis. First however they listen to a report from a messenger who tells them that the Ethiopians are marching on Thebes. Radames is named leader, and Amneris places the standard in his arms, bidding him 'Return Victorious.' These words are echoed by the assembly, who lead off the young warrior to the Temple of Isis. Aida left alone gives voice to her conflicting emotions in the aria, *Ritorna vincitor*.

SCENE II. THE TEMPLE OF VULCAN AT MEMPHIS.

The Priestesses accompanied by harps sing and dance while Radames is invested with consecrated armour before the great god Ftha.

INTERVAL

Warning bells will be sounded five minutes and two minutes before the rise of the curtain

ACT II

SCENE I. THE APARTMENTS OF AMNERIS.

Amneris longs for the return of Radames (*Ah! vieni amor mio*). She is being dressed by her slaves for the triumphal return of the Egyptian army. After the moorish slave-boys have danced for her, Aida enters, and the two women are left alone. Amneris pretends that Radames has been killed, and when Aida confesses her love for him, she learns from Amneris that he is alive after all. Amneris declares herself as Aida's rival and bids her to follow her to the gates of the city (Thebes) where the triumphal entry of the army is to take place.

SCENE II. THE GATES OF THEBES.

The populace has gathered to welcome the victorious army and its young leader Radames. The Priests assemble, and the King and Amneris make their entry. The soldiers file past their King, then a group of dancing girls appear, celebrating the victory. Finally, Radames enters. He is greeted by the King, and then Amneris gives him the laurel wreath. The King asks Radames to name whatever he wishes as a reward. First however the young warrior asks that the prisoners of war be brought in. Among them is Amonasro, who in a hurried aside asks his daughter not to betray his rank.

Amonasro describes how he saw the King of Ethiopia killed in battle (*Quest' assisa*) and pleads for clemency. This plea is taken up by all the assembly with the exception of the Priests. Radames too urges the King to pardon the prisoners; he agrees to do this provided Amonasro is retained as a hostage. The King then announces that as a reward for his bravery, he is offering him the hand of Amneris in marriage. The differing emotions of Aida, Amneris, Radames, and

Amonasro are expressed in a magnificent ensemble, and as Amneris leads Radames off, Aida falls weeping in her father's arms.

INTERVAL

Warning bells will be sounded five minutes and two minutes before the rise of the curtain

ACT III

THE BANKS OF THE NILE NEAR THE TEMPLE OF ISIS.

On the night before her marriage to Radames Amneris is led by Ramfis to the Temple of Isis on the banks of Nile, where she is to spend the night in prayer.

The scene shifts; Aida arrives to meet Radames. She sings of her own country and its beauties (*O cieli azzuri*). She hears someone approaching, but instead of Radames, it is her father, who has followed her. He tells her that the Ethiopians have again risen, and that once more Radames is to march against her own people. He suggests that she has it in her power to help her country, which she will surely see again (*Riverdrò le foreste imbalsamate*). Aida asks Amonasro what he would have her do, and at first is shocked when he suggests that she ask her lover to disclose the road by which the Egyptians are to march against the Ethiopians; but her father draws a terrifying picture of what will happen to her kinsfolk if she refuses, and she consents—*Oh patria, quanto mi costi!* (Oh my country, how much you ask of me) she cries.

Amonasro conceals himself within earshot, and Radames enters. The first part of the great Nile duet begins with Radames expressing his joy at seeing his beloved Aida again (*Pur ti riveggo, mia dolce Aida*). Then Aida suggests that they escape together and live happily far away from Egypt (*Là tra foreste vergini*). 'But which path must we take to avoid the Egyptian army?' she asks; 'By the path we have chosen to fall upon the enemy which will be deserted until tomorrow', replies Radames. 'And which path is that?' continues Aida. 'The pass of Nàpata' replies the young soldier. His words are echoed by Amonasro who has emerged from his hiding place, and declares himself as the Ethiopian King. A short trio follows in which Amonasro tries to win Radames over, but the delay is fatal; in this moment surprised by Amneris and Ramfis, Aida and Amonasro flee, and Radames surrenders his sword to the High Priest.

INTERVAL

Warning bells will be sounded five minutes and two minutes before the rise of the curtain

ACT IV

INSIDE THE TEMPLE OF VULCAN.

Amneris asks one of the guards to bring Radames to her. She pleads with him to declare that he is innocent; he refuses. She even offers her life for his on condition that he vows never to see Aida again. Radames refuses, for he cannot live without Aida, and he is led away to his trial. Three times the voice of Ramfis is heard accusing Radames of treason, and each time Radames is silent. He is sentenced to be buried alive. Amneris gives vent to her emotions in a magnificent outburst against Ramfis and the Priests, calling down the curse of heaven upon them.

Radames has been left to die, and the last stones are being put in place above his tomb. He sees a form, he thinks it is a vision, but it is Aida, who has anticipated his death and has come to die with him. Together they bid farewell to earth (*O terra, addio*), while above, Amneris prays that the gods may grant eternal peace to Radames.

H.D.R.

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AIDA

with

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as

Amneris

and

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 "Un Ballo in Maschera"—"Morro, ma prima in Grazia" (*Verdi*)
 with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Loibner NBE 11035

Wagner
 Dich, teure Halle.
 (Elisabeth's greeting from "Tannhauser"—Act 2)
 Allmäch' ge Jungfrau!
 (Elisabeth's prayer from "Tannhauser"—Act 3)
 Einsam in trüben Tagen.
 (Elsa's dream from "Lohengrin"—Act 1)
 Jo-ho-hoe! Traft ihr das Schiff.
 (Senta's ballad from "Der Fliegende Holländer"—Act 2)

Verdi
 Tu che le vanità.
 (Elisabetta's aria from "Don Carlos"—Act 4)
 Timor di me?—D'amor sull' ali rosee.
 (Leonora's recit. and aria from "Il Trovatore"—Act 4)
 Son giunta! grazie, o Dio!—Madre, pietosa Vergine.
 (Leonora's recit. and aria from "La Forza del Destino"—Act 2)
 Pace, pace, mio Dio!
 (Leonora's aria from "La Forza del Destino"—Act 4)
 The Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Rudolf Moralt ABL 3130



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Patricia du Heaume
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Jean McDonald
Gwyneth Owen
Celia Penny
Jean Povey
Leah Roberts
Gina Servini
Judith Stubbs
Barbara Whelan

Contraltos

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Patricia Caine
Alexandra Cook
Rosamund Dalton
Myfanwy Edwards
Brenda Godfray
Catherine Harding
Vera Hoddinott
Margaret Lane
Diana Odling
Nada Pobjoy
Else Proffen
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Shirley Williams
Dorothy Yeowart

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Roderick Bowen
Andrew Daniels
Thomas Fletcher
Emlyn Jones
James Jones
Wilfred Jones
David Lewis
Ignatius McFadyen
James McClusky
Michael O'Farrell
Lewis Powell
Reinald Reece
Ernest Rosser
Cyril Somers
Clifford Starr
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John Brown
Stanley Cooper
Afan Davies
Ronald Firmager
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Eric Garrett
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Chorus Master: DOUGLAS ROBINSON

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Sidney Marcus
Graham Wood
Reginald Hill
Anthony Valente
John Fisher
John Woolf

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Bernard Gould
Jack Musikant
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Rowland Sirrell
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Reginald Crick
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Lawrence Lackland
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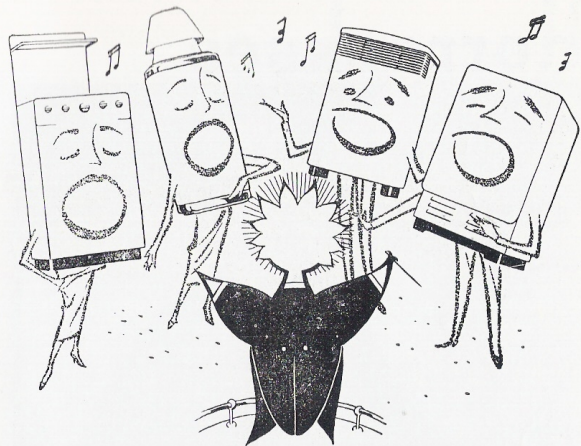
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OPERA

The June issue of this magazine has a picture of Boris Christoff as King Phillip on the cover and photographs and a report of the recent *Don Carlos* performances at Covent Garden. It also includes a Profile of Ramon Vinay, appearing this month as Tristan, an article on The Problems of Provincial Opera by Professor Procter-Gregg, biographies of this month's new singers in London and Glyndebourne, and the usual news and reports.

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