



Study Guide

2012/13 Season

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Three Great Resources for Teaching Your Students About Opera

1. Student Night

In order to expose student audiences to the glory of opera, Manitoba Opera created Student Night. It's an affordable opportunity for students to watch the dress rehearsal, an exciting look at the art and magic of opera before the curtain goes up on Opening Night, when tension is high and anything can happen. Please note:

- *Aida* is an opera in four acts, with a running time of approximately three hours.
- The dress rehearsal is the last opportunity the singers will have on stage to work with the orchestra before Opening Night. Since vocal demands are so great on opera singers, some choose not to sing in full voice during the dress rehearsal in order to avoid unnecessary strain.

2. The Study Guide

This study guide has been created to assist you in preparing your students for their visit to the opera at the Centennial Concert Hall. It is our hope that you will be able to add this to your existing curriculum in order to expand your students' understanding of opera, literature, history, and fine art.

Materials in the study guide may be copied and distributed to students. Some students may wish to go over the information at home if there is insufficient time to discuss in class.

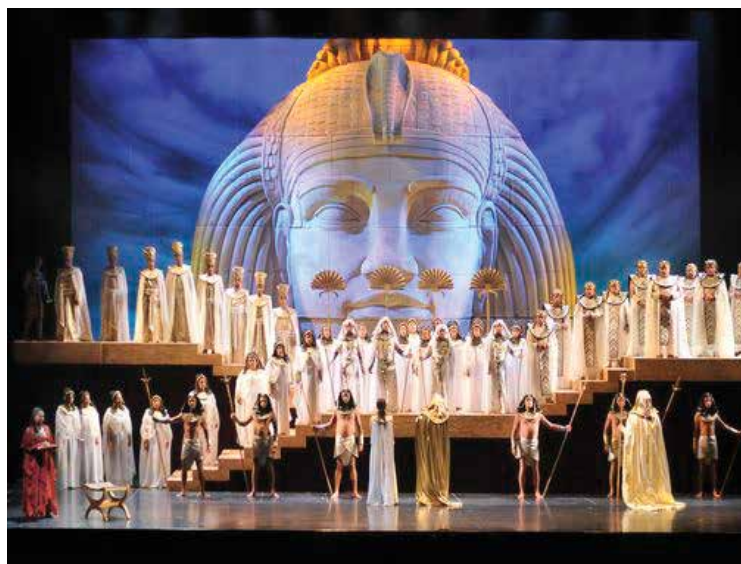
3. Opera in a Trunk

Bring the magic of opera right into the classroom with our Opera in a Trunk. We provide you with all the tools you need – the music, costumes, props, story line, etc. – to recreate some of the world's greatest operas with your class.

- Contact Livia Dymond for more details on how to order our Opera in a Trunk for *Aida*, complete with costumes, props, CDs, DVDs and activities for experiencing the opera in the classroom.

Aida: Good To Know

- *Aida* (pronounced eye-E-dah) is a tragic opera in four acts, composed by Giuseppe Verdi with an Italian libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni.
- *Aida* tells the story of a tragic love triangle, with the two who love one another dying together in a sealed tomb. Set in ancient Egypt, the opera deals with themes of love and patriotism.
- The story of *Aida* is based on a scenario by French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette, with development of the material by Verdi and French theatre director and librettist, Camille du Locle.
- A romantic grand opera, *Aida* is regarded as the grandest of all grand operas because it is usually lavishly staged with a very large cast and orchestra.
- The world premiere took place on December 24, 1871, at the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo, Egypt. The production was met with great acclaim and was soon mounted at major opera houses throughout Italy and the world.
- Verdi's 26th, and most popular opera, *Aida* is a staple of standard operatic repertoire, appearing in the top 20 of the most-performed operas worldwide. It is the Metropolitan Opera's second most frequently performed opera.
- Verdi is considered the greatest 19th Century composer of Italian opera. He composed many of the most popular and enduring operas of all time including *Rigoletto*, *Nabucco*, *Il Trovatore*, *La Traviata*, *Falstaff*, and *La Forza del Destino*.
- Following *Aida*, Verdi temporarily retired from writing opera. He continued to write non-operatic works though most of his time was devoted to his farm. The next opera he wrote was *Otello*, in 1884. Throughout his life he wrote a total of 28 operas.
- *Aida* has been adapted for motion pictures on several occasions, most notably in a 1953 production which starred Lois Maxwell and Sophia Loren, and a 1987 production. In both cases, the lead actors lip-synched to recordings by actual opera singers. The opera's story, but not its music, was used as the basis for a 1998 musical written by Elton John and Tim Rice, *Elaborate Lives: The Legend of Aida*.
- Manitoba Opera's production stars Michele Capalbo as Aida, Manitoba's own Phillip Ens (Ramfis) and Gregory Dahl (Amonasro).
- The last time Manitoba Opera staged *Aida* was in 2000.



Calgary Opera's production of *Aida*
(Manitoba Opera will be featuring this set in its production)

Production Information

Aida

April 13, 16, 19

(Dress Rehearsal / Student Night: April 11)

Centennial Concert Hall

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto in Italian by Antonio Ghislanzoni

Premiere Performance: Khedivial Opera House in Cairo, Egypt on December 24, 1871

Approximately three hours in four acts, with one 20-minute intermission.

Sung in Italian with projected English translations.

PRINCIPAL CAST

In order of vocal appearance

RAMFIS	Phillip Ens	<i>Bass</i>
RADAMES	Rafael Davila	<i>Tenor</i>
AMNERIS	Tiziana Carraro	<i>Mezzo-soprano</i>
AIDA	Michele Capalbo	<i>Soprano</i>
THE KING OF EGYPT	David Watson	<i>Bass</i>
MESSENGER	Terence Mierau	<i>Tenor</i>
HIGH PRIESTESS	Lara Ciekiewicz	<i>Soprano</i>
AMONASRO	Gregory Dahl	<i>Baritone</i>

Manitoba Opera Chorus

Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra

Conductor	Tyrone Paterson
Director	Brian Deedrick
Scenery and props	Edmonton Opera
Costumes	Edmonton Opera
Lighting designer	Scott Henderson
Stage manager	Robert Pel
Assistant stage managers	Kathryn Ball, Candace Maxwell
Projected titles	Sheldon Johnson

Synopsis

Act I:

In a hall in the palace of the King of Memphis, Ramfis, the High Priest, tells the warrior Radames that Ethiopian forces might again be threatening Egypt. Radames dreams of victory in battle; returning to the woman he loves, the Ethiopian slave Aida; and bringing her to her native land with a crown on her head.

The Egyptian princess Amneris enters, followed by her slave Aida. Amneris sees Radames' reaction to Aida's arrival and realizes he loves her. She attempts to discover if Aida feels the same. The King and Ramfis enter with ministers, priests and captains. A messenger reports that Ethiopian forces have invaded Egypt. The King announces that Radames is to lead the Egyptian forces and he is sent to the Temple of Vulcan to prepare for battle. Aida bitterly grieves for her fate: to love a man who is the enemy of everything she loves.

Act II:

Radames and the Egyptian forces have triumphed. Amneris, in her apartments preparing for the celebrations, secretly prays that her love for Radames will be returned. When Aida enters, Amneris tells her that Radames has been killed in battle. Aida's reaction to this lie, and her relief when Amneris tells her that Radames is alive, is all the proof Amneris needs of Aida's love. She coldly tells Aida that they are romantic rivals. Aida begs for mercy, telling Amneris that her love will only be extinguished by death.

Radames, with his army, triumphantly enters an avenue at the gates of Thebes and greets the King. The King offers him anything he wants, and Radames asks that the Ethiopian prisoners be brought forth. Aida is overcome to see her father, Amonasro, amongst the prisoners, who instructs her not to reveal his identity as king. Amonasro tells the King that he witnessed the Ethiopian king's death. Radames asks that the Ethiopian captives be freed now that their king is dead. Ramfis convinces the Egyptian king to keep Aida and her father captive. The King agrees and gives Radames Amneris's hand in marriage. The Egyptians give praise to the goddess Isis, while Amonasro secretly swears vengeance, Amneris rejoices, and Radames and Aida silently grieve over their fate.



Arena di Verona - August 2011 production of *Aida*

Act III:

Ramfis enters the Temple of Isis with Amneris, who has come to pray for her wedding the next day. Aida approaches the temple, having received a message from Radames to meet her. Amonasro meets Aida, telling her that he has recognized Aida's love for Radames. He urges her to use it to save their people: only she can discover the plans of the Egyptian army. Aida reluctantly agrees, and Amonasro takes cover as Radames approaches. Radames wants to seek favour with the King to win the right to marry Aida, but Aida convinces him to run away with her instead. As they formulate their plan, Radames inadvertently reveals the Egyptian army's plan. On hearing this, Amonasro reveals himself and his real identity to Radames. Having heard everything, Amneris and Ramfis appear from the temple. Amonasro and Aida flee. Damning himself as a traitor, Radames surrenders to Ramfis.

Act IV:

Amneris knows that Radames was planning to escape with Aida, and did not intend to reveal his battle plans. She has him brought to her and pleads with him to defend himself, promising to try to save him if he will renounce Aida. Radames refuses. Radames is taken to the judgment chamber where he is unwilling to defend himself to Ramfis and the priests. He is sentenced to the death of the disgraced, by being entombed alive.

Radames is entombed in a crypt under the Temple of Vulcan. He sees a shadow move towards him. It's Aida, who has slipped into the crypt to die alongside Radames. Radames unsuccessfully tries desperately to move the huge stone that has locked them into the crypt. They bid farewell to the earth, awaiting their entrance into the next world, while above the tomb, Amneris prays for peace.

-Courtesy of Canadian Opera Company

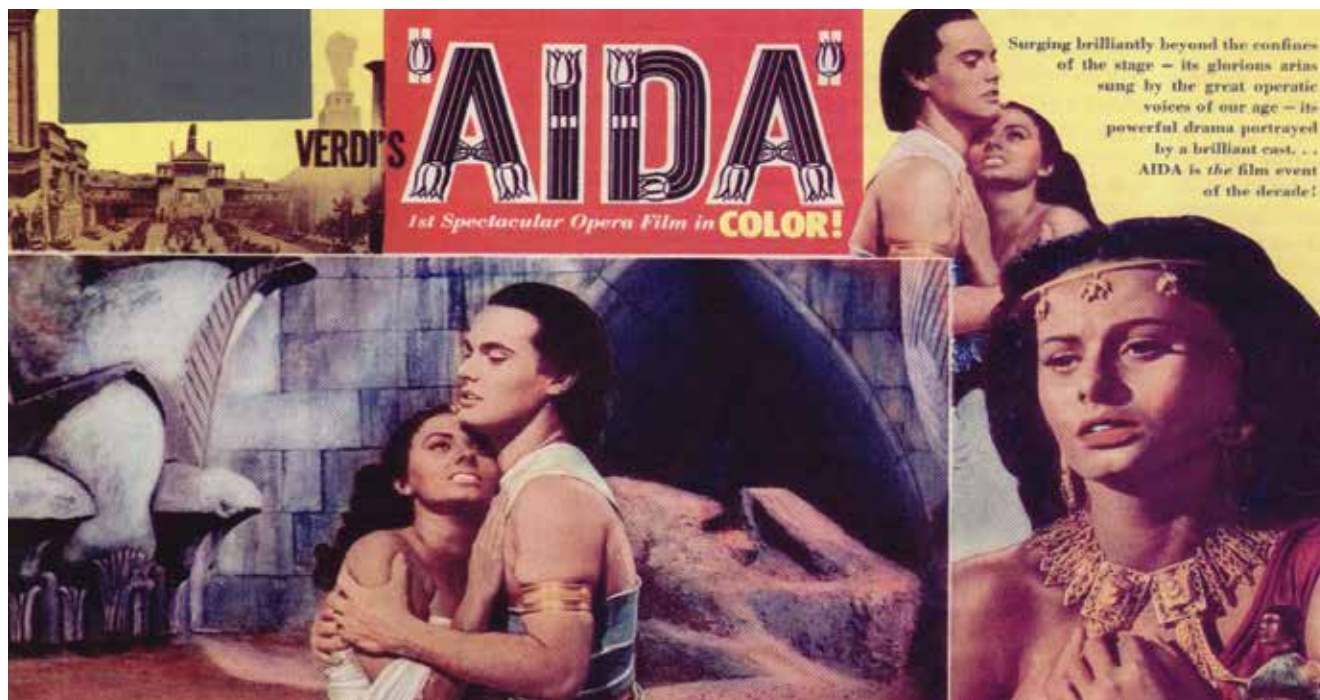


Arena di Verona - August 2011 production of *Aida*

Aida Principal Characters

In order of vocal appearance

Name	Description	Pronunciation
Ramfis	High priest of Egypt	RAHM-fiss
Radames	Captain of the Egyptian guard; secretly in love with Aida	rah-dah-MEZ
Amneris	Daughter of the King of Egypt; in love with Radames; master to Aida	ahm-NEH-riss
Aida	A Ethiopian princess; enslaved to Amneris; secretly in love with Radames; daughter of Amonasro	eye-E-dah
The King of Egypt	Father of Amneris	
Messenger		
High Priestess		
Amonasro	King of Ethiopia; Aida's father; taken prisoner by Radames	ah-moh-NAHZ-roh



Poster of 1953 *Aida* film featuring Lois Maxwell and Sophia Loren

The Principal Artists

Michele Capalbo *Aida*

Born and raised in Kitchener, Ontario, soprano Michele Capalbo is widely renowned as an interpreter of Verdi and Puccini and has performed leading roles in some of the world's most prestigious theatres such as Houston Grand Opera, L'Opéra de Nice, Parma, l'Opéra de Montréal, Teatro Regio di Parma, Canadian Opera Company, Seattle Opera, and the New York City Opera. She last appeared with Manitoba Opera as Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, November 2008.



Tiziana Carraro *Amneris*

Acclaimed interpreter of mezzo soprano dramatic roles, Italian Tiziana Carraro regularly performs in theatres such as the Arena in Verona, the Opera in Rome, the Fenice in Venice, the Deutsche Oper in Berlin, the New Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv, the Verdi Festival in Busseto, and the prestigious Strasbourg Music Festival. *Aida* will be Ms. Carraro's Manitoba Opera debut.



Rafael Davila *Radames*

Puerto Rican tenor Rafael Davila regularly performs across the U.S. and has sung with such companies as Palm Beach Opera, Washington National Opera, Sarasota Opera, National Lyric Opera of New York, and Lyric Opera of Kansas. He has also appeared internationally with such companies as Opera de Puerto Rico, New Zealand Opera, Teatro San Carlo (Naples), and the Reisoper (Amsterdam). *Aida* will be Mr. Davila's Manitoba Opera debut.



Phillip Ens *Ramfis*

Phillip Ens, from Winkler, MB, made his operatic debut in 1985 with Manitoba Opera. He has since been heard throughout the world on the stages of the most important theatres including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, L'Opéra National de Paris, and many more. He last appeared with Manitoba Opera as Sarastro in *The Magic Flute*, April 2011.



Gregory Dahl *Amonasro*

Winnipeg-born Gregory Dahl has boldly staked his claim to a position of prominence among baritones of his generation with performances notable for richness of characterization and a remarkable vocal authority. He has sung all across North America with such companies as Canadian Opera Company, Edmonton Opera, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Vancouver Opera, and Opera Theatre of St. Louis, to name a few. He last appeared with Manitoba Opera as Jokanaan in *Salome*, November 2011.



The Composer

Giuseppe Verdi

Born: October 10, 1813

Died: January 27, 1901

Giuseppe Verdi dominated Italian opera for half a century with 28 operas that include some of the best known in the repertoire. He was not only a very popular and successful composer, but an astute businessman and producer, an active and committed farmer, a hero of the Italian nationalist movement, a member of the first Italian Parliament, and a generous philanthropist.

He was born the same year as the German composer Richard Wagner, to whom he loathed to be compared. Verdi was born Giuseppe Fortunino Francesco Verdi in the small village of Roncole, about 65 miles southeast of Milan in the province of Parma in Italy.



Young Verdi showed an early interest in music and was encouraged by his father, who bought an old spinet piano and sent him to the church organist for lessons. When Verdi was 10, his father sent him to the nearby city of Busseto for further musical training. He stayed in the home of Antonio Barezzi, a local merchant and music enthusiast and gave singing and piano lessons to Barezzi's daughter Margherita, whom he would later marry in the year 1836.

In 1836, having returned to Busseto, Verdi accepted the position of maestro of the Busseto Philharmonic and composed his first opera, *Roccester*, which he later renamed *Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*. The opera was successful enough to persuade the impresario at La Scala to offer Verdi a contract to write more operas.

The Verdis' daughter, Virginia, was born in 1837, but died the following year. In 1839 Giuseppe and Margherita moved back to Milan with their little son, Icilio Romano, who died shortly after. While Verdi was working on his next opera, a comedy called *Un Giorno di Regno*, his wife died. The deaths of his entire young family within such a short time left him devastated. Although he completed *Un Giorno di Regno*, it was a failure, and Verdi resolved never to compose again.

It took two years for Merelli to persuade Verdi to compose another opera, *Nabucco*. Verdi became a celebrity overnight. The opera's Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, "Va pensiero" was sung in the streets of Milan and became an unofficial Italian national anthem.

During this period came his "big three," the three operas that are his most popular. *Rigoletto* premiered in 1851 in Venice; *Il trovatore* was launched in Rome in 1853, followed six weeks later by *La traviata* in Venice.

Verdi's biggest operas remain as popular today as when they first appeared; they form the core of today's standard repertoire.

Verdi suffered a stroke on January 21, 1901 and died six days later. He was buried in Milan at the Casa di Riposo. His funeral was a national event, and thousands lined the streets, singing "Va pensiero," the famous chorus from *Nabucco*. Among the mourners were such great composers as Rossini, Donizetti, and Puccini.

The Librettist

Antonio Ghislanzoni

Born: November 25, 1824

Died: July 16, 1893

Born in Lecco, Lombardy, in Italy, Antonio Ghislanzoni was an Italian journalist, poet, and novelist. He studied briefly in a seminary, but was expelled for bad conduct in 1841. He then decided to study medicine in Pavia, but abandoned this after a short time to pursue a singing career as a baritone and to cultivate his literary interests. In 1856, after his singing voice had deteriorated, Ghislanzoni became deeply involved in journalism within the bohemian circles of Milan. He served as director of *Italia musicale* and editor of the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* and also founded the magazine *Rivista minima*. By 1869, Ghislanzoni retired from journalism and dedicated himself to literature and writing libretti for opera. In total, he wrote over 85 libretti, of which the best known are *Aida* and the revised version of *La forza del destino*.



What is a Libretto?

Libretto means “little book” in Italian. It refers to the written text of an opera set to music by the composer. Today, we commonly refer to an opera as being ‘by’ the composer of the music, but the text is a vital component and is normally written first. In earlier times it was often regarded as more important than the music, and it was common for audience members to purchase the libretto to read.

Early composers were usually contracted to set music to a pre-existing text. Only later did composers (such as Mozart and Verdi) work in close collaboration with their librettists. A few composers – notably Wagner – wrote their own texts.



The Music of *Aida*

Aida is an opera from Verdi's middle period of composition, and it uses more complex harmonies and more contrapuntal textures (different voices playing different rhythms at the same time) than his earlier operas. The orchestra required to play this music is quite large—around 60 players—so it requires singers with exceptionally large voices to be able to be heard over the orchestra.

Music Excerpts:

1. Tenor aria: "Celeste Aida", Act I, sung by Radames

Radames dreams both of gaining victory on the battlefield and of Aida, the Ethiopian slave, with whom he is secretly in love.

2. Soprano aria: "Ritorna vincitor", Act II, sung by Aida

Alone in the hall, Aida is torn between her love for her father, her country, and Radames.

3. Triumphal March; Act II, scene for chorus and all principal singers

Radames returns victorious and the troops march into the city (chorus, Ramfis: "Gloria all'Egitto, ad Iside" / "Glory to Egypt, to Isis!"). The Egyptian king decrees that on this day the triumphant Radames may have anything he wishes. The Ethiopian captives are rounded up and Amonasro appears among them.

4. Judgement scene, Act IV, sung by Amneris (mezzo-soprano) with Radames (tenor), Ramfis (bass) and chorus offstage

Radames' trial takes place offstage; he does not reply to Ramfis' accusations and is condemned to death, while Amneris, who remains onstage, pleads with the priests to show him mercy. As he is sentenced to be buried alive, Amneris curses the priests while Radames is taken away (Judgment scene, Amneris, Ramfis, and chorus: "Ahime....morir mi sento" / "Alas... I feel death").

5. Duet: "La fatal pietra", Act IV, sung by Radames and Aida

Radames has been taken into the lower floor of the temple and sealed up in a dark vault. Thinking that he is alone and hoping that Aida is in a safer place, he hears a sigh and then sees Aida. She has hidden herself in the vault in order to die with Radames. (Radames and Aida: "La fatal pietra sopra me si chiuse." / "The fatal stone now closes over me.") They accept their terrible fate (Radames: "Morir! Si pura e bella" / "To die! So pure and lovely!") and bid farewell to earth and its sorrows.

- Courtesy of Calgary Opera



Stella Roman as the title role in
The Metropolitan Opera's 1941 production of *Aida*

Romantic Grand Opera

Opera during the romantic period (approximately 1827-1900) focused on the expression of emotion, imagination, and individualism. Composers strived to more closely interweave the music and the drama, with Verdi as the most influential and dominant composer of this period.

Grand Opera is a genre of opera from the Romantic period, which originated in France and focuses on visual spectacle. Generally in four or five acts, Grand Opera is characterized by a historically based plot, large-scale casts and orchestras, and (in their original productions) lavish and spectacular design and stage effects, as well as ballet.

Verdi combined two operatic styles in composing *Aida*. The Italian approach, which stressed the warmth and flexibility of the human voice combined with melodic beauty and exuberant outpourings of emotion, was combined with the pageantry, choruses and dance of French Grand Opera. The fusing of these two styles was a goal Verdi had pursued for some time. He achieved more continuity with *Aida* than any of his previous works.

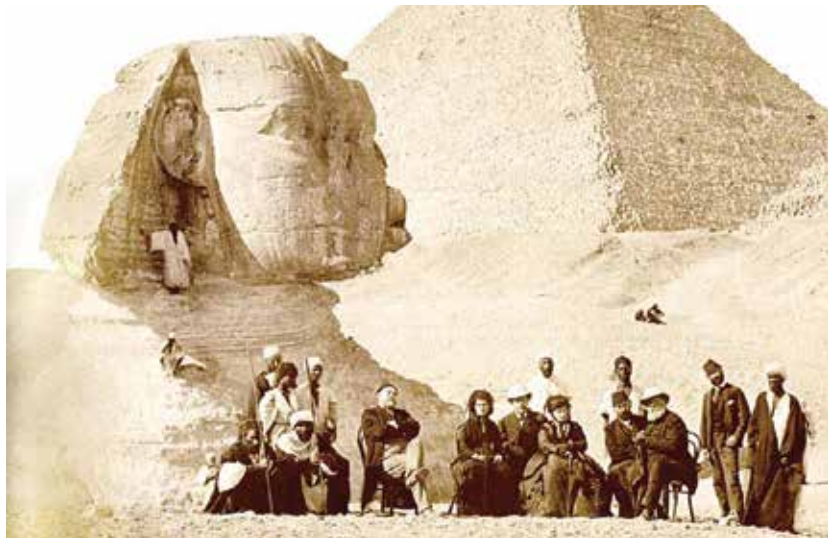


Aida, 1957, The USSR Bolshoi Theater
(currently the State Academic Opera and Ballet Theater of Russia)

The History of *Aida*

In 1869, the Khedive of Egypt (Ismail Pasha, the Viceroy of Egypt for the Ottoman Empire and a fan of Verdi and all things European) requested that Verdi write an inaugural hymn for the opening of the Suez Canal in Cairo. When Verdi refused, the Khedive was then determined to commission a magnificent opera to open the new opera house (the Khedivial Opera House) in Cairo. Verdi turned down this offer as well, so the opera house opened with Verdi's existing *Rigoletto* in 1869.

Finding suitable librettos was an ever-present concern for Verdi as he matured as a composer. Archival letters document his dissatisfaction with many of the librettos presented to him during the 1860s. He took an interest in composing *Aida* after receiving a manuscript that had come from a well known Egyptologist and archaeologist, Auguste Mariette, a Frenchman with an extensive background in ancient Egyptian history and culture. Mariette had written a scenario set in the time of the ancient pharaohs that was created with the approval of the Khedive. Mariette



Auguste Mariette (seated, far left) and Emperor Pedro II of Brazil (seated, far right) with others during the monarch's visit to the Giza Necropolis at the end of 1871.

convinced Verdi to take on the project by telling him that if he didn't want the job, German composer Richard Wagner might be interested and would probably do a very good job! He also told Verdi that the Khedive would be willing to give him almost anything: "If you were to ask for a pyramid (the biggest one, of course) as a bonus, he's just the sort of person who might give it to you." Verdi agreed to the project and engaged Antonio Ghislanzoni, a librettist with whom he had collaborated on an earlier work. Verdi himself was very involved in the writing of the libretto using his long experience in the theatre to help shape the dialogue and the arrangement of the scenes. Auguste Mariette designed the set and costumes for the premiere in Cairo and used his knowledge of ancient Egypt to make the staging as authentic as possible. The sets and costumes were built in Paris but delayed in shipment by the Franco-Prussian War and the Siege of Paris. Verdi donated much of his earnings for this opera to help victims of the Siege.

Aida finally opened at the Khedivial Opera House in Cairo on December 24, 1871. It was produced with no expense spared. Props included a shield and helmet made of solid silver, a crown of pure gold, and a cast of 300 in the second act triumphal march. Verdi did not attend the premiere but was not pleased to hear that the audience had consisted of invited dignitaries, politicians and critics, but no members of the general public. He therefore considered the Italian (and European) premiere, held at La Scala, Milan in Italy on February 8, 1872, to be its real premiere. Public and critical acclaim was immediate and *Aida* was performed at all the major opera houses of the world in the months and years that followed and throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Currently, *Aida* is one of the 20 most-performed operas worldwide. The Metropolitan Opera in New York City has presented this opera more than 1100 times since it premiered in New York on November 26, 1873, making it the company's second most frequently performed opera.

Ancient Egypt: Geography

Ancient Egypt was an ancient civilization in Northeastern Africa, concentrated along the lower reaches of the Nile River, in what is now the modern country of Egypt.

The Nile

Since ancient times, Egyptian civilization has depended on the Nile River to bring water, fish, and fertile soil to the land. It also served as the main highway and sewage system. The Nile flows northward through Egypt's Nile Valley (known as Upper, or Southern, Egypt). At Memphis, near modern Cairo, the river splits into several branches (the Nile Delta; known as Lower, or Northern, Egypt) before emptying into the Mediterranean Sea.

Memphis

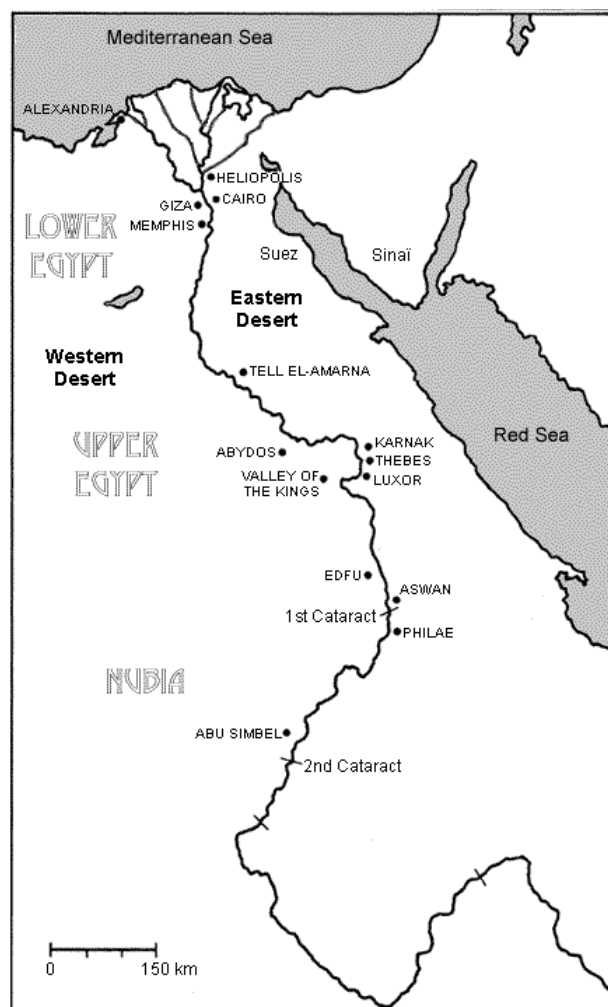
The action of *Aida* begins in the city of Memphis. Memphis was the ancient capital of Lower Egypt and was situated on the west bank of the Nile. It was also the first capital of Egypt during the Old Kingdom period (c. 2686-2181 BCE) when it was chosen by King Menes to unite the upper and lower kingdoms. Its main port served to distribute food and merchandise throughout the ancient kingdom. The pyramids of Giza were built overlooking the city of Memphis. Memphis is no longer inhabited though some of its ruins still remain.

Thebes

Later, in Act II, the action of *Aida* moves to the city of Thebes. Thebes was an ancient Egyptian city located on either side of the Nile and within the modern city of Luxor. The city of Thebes was the principal city of Upper Egypt and was also the capital during parts of the Middle Kingdom (c. 2055-1650 BCE) and New Kingdom (c. 1550-1069 BCE).

Ethiopia

In ancient Egyptian times, Ethiopia (also referred to as *Nubia* or *Kush*) was located on the south border of Egypt. Sudan is the name of the modern country that now includes Upper Nubia.



Ancient Egypt: Social Hierarchy



Egyptian Kings (Pharaohs):

The most powerful person in all of ancient Egypt was the king (pharaoh). The king was the political and religious leader of the Egyptian people, holding the titles 'Lord of the Two Lands' and 'High Priest of Every Temple.' As 'Lord of the Two Lands' the king was the ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt. He owned all of the land, made laws, collected taxes, and defended Egypt against foreigners. As 'High Priest of Every Temple,' the king represented the gods on Earth. He performed rituals and built temples to honour the gods.

Many kings went to war when their land was threatened or when they wanted to control foreign lands. If the king won the battle, the conquered people had to recognize the Egyptian king as their ruler and offer him the finest and most valuable goods from their land.

Priests/Priestesses: The pharaoh appointed high priests/priestesses to carry out the sacred rituals at each temple. They enjoyed great power and wealth in Egyptian society.

Nobles: Nobles ruled the regions of Egypt (Nomes). They were responsible for making local laws and keeping order in their region.

Soldiers: Becoming a soldier was an opportunity for a person to rise in society. The soldiers protected the trade routes that brought wealth to ancient Egypt. During a time of peace, the soldiers built temples giving a place for the ancient Egyptian people to worship, make offerings, and please their gods.

Scribes: Scribes were important people in ancient Egypt as they were the only people who knew how to read and write. Scribes came from wealthy families and took years of training to learn the complex Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Merchants & Artisans: Merchants and artisans usually enjoyed a very comfortable lifestyle.

Merchants were much like traders, often travelling to different countries to trade objects such as gold, papyrus, linen, and jewelry for things like ebony and cedar, along with other items that they did not have in their own region.

Artisans were skilled workers such as pottery makers, leather workers, sculptors, painters, weavers, jewelry makers, shoe makers, and tailors. They would work in large workshops and were employed by the pharaoh, government, or the temples.

Farmers: Farmers were referred to as peasants and made up approximately 80% of the population. They worked the land of the pharaoh and nobles and were given housing, food, and clothes in return.

Slaves & Servants: Slaves and servants were usually prisoners captured in war and owned by the pharaoh. They were the lowest class in Egyptian society.

Ancient Egypt: Architecture

Pyramids

The ancient Egyptians built pyramids as tombs for the pharaohs and their queens. The Egyptians believed that only the souls of kings went on to enjoy life with the gods. They were buried with many treasures which could be enjoyed in their afterlife. The pyramids were built on the west side of the Nile (symbol of death, where the sun falls into the underworld).

The Great Sphinx is a large human-headed lion that was carved from a mound of limestone, located on the Giza plateau on the west bank of the Nile in Giza, near Memphis. It is the largest monolith (a single piece of stone) statue in the world, standing 73.5 meters long, 19.3 meters wide, and 20.22 meters high. It is also the oldest known monumental sculpture, and is believed to have been built in the Old Kingdom period during the reign of the pharaoh Khafra (c. 2558–2532 BC). The sphinx guards the front of Khafra's pyramid.



Temples

In ancient Egypt, the people worshipped many gods. The Egyptians built huge temples where they would gather to worship these gods. Only the king or the priest on duty was ever allowed into the innermost chamber of the temple, where the naos was kept (the shrine built of wood), where the statue of the god was situated. The worshippers were never allowed beyond the outer court, but they could leave their offerings with priests who brought them into the temple.

Temple of Vulcan (also known as the Temple of Ptah): This is the temple where Radames is sent to prepare for battle in Act I and where he is later, in the final act, entombed with Aida. The temple was dedicated to the worship of the creator god Ptah and was the largest and most important temple in ancient Memphis.

Temple of Isis: Act III takes place at the Temple of Isis, located on the Egyptian island of Philae in the Nile. This temple is dedicated to Isis, who was the goddess of love, fertility, healing, and magic. Isis is an important figure in the ancient world. During the Old Kingdom period, she was represented as the wife or assistant to the deceased king. She listened to the prayers of the wealthy, maidens, aristocrats, and rulers and was worshiped as the giver of life, a healer, and protector of kings.



Temple of Isis

Palaces

Palaces were the residences of the pharaohs and their entourage. They consisted of a complex of buildings designed to house the headquarters of power and the temples for worshipping the gods.

Ancient Egypt:

Building of the Pyramids

For many years, it was commonly thought that the pyramids were built by slaves, but archaeologists now have reason to believe that they were built by skilled labourers who were paid for their work. Some of them were probably full-time pyramid builders, but most were labourers who were contracted by the king for a three-month period, then sent home again.

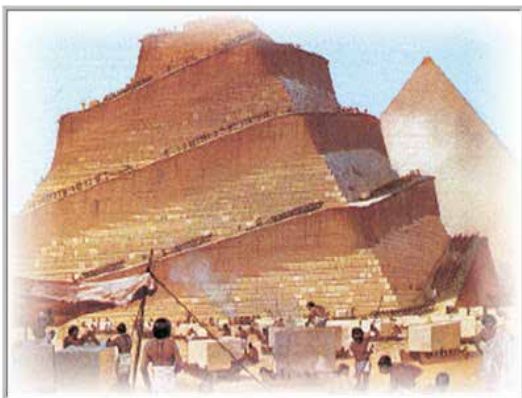
According to evidence gathered at excavation sites, it's believed that approximately 2,000 workers were on site at any one time. Over the years, the workforce would have added up to approximately 30,000. It took almost 30 years to build the Giza Pyramids, the most famous and largest pyramid complex in Egypt.



Aerial view of the Giza pyramid complex

The pyramids were built of limestone, granite, basalt, gypsum (mortar), and baked mud bricks. Copper and stone-cutting tools were used to carve out the blocks in the quarries and levers were used to remove the blocks. No one is quite sure how the workers moved the stone blocks from the quarries to the building site. The average size of a block was 2.5 tons with some weighing up to 15 tons which is about the same weight as a bus! Most likely, they dragged the blocks with wooden sleds and ropes as wheels wouldn't have been effective on the desert sand and gravel. Other theories include the use of wooden rollers or a customized wooden sled that fit around the blocks and which would allow a crew of about eight men to roll the blocks along the ground. For long distance travel, the blocks were transported down the Nile on barges (flat-bottom boats).

The Egyptian pyramids were built very tall (the Great Pyramid of Giza initially measured 146.5 meters) and Egyptologists estimate that the Great Pyramid may include as many as 2.3 million blocks. There are many different theories on how the workers managed to place the heavy blocks without the use of modern machinery. The most common theory is that they used a system of levers and ramps.



Ramps would have been built up around the pyramid much like modern scaffolding, allowing the workers to drag the blocks to the top of the pyramid. Some Egyptologists believe that a single straight ramp was used while others believe the workers used a spiraling ramp. Most theories also include the use of levers to hoist the blocks up the ramps.

At completion, the pyramids were surfaced by white "casing stones" – slant-faced, but flat-topped, blocks of highly polished white limestone. This casing was stripped away in the Middle Ages to embellish the city of Cairo.

A Short Overview of Opera

An opera, like a play, is a dramatic form of theatre that includes scenery, props and costumes. In opera, however, the actors are trained singers who sing their lines instead of speaking them. An orchestra accompanies the singers. A conductor coordinates both the singers on stage and the musicians in the orchestra pit.

Opera consists of many dimensions: the human voice, orchestral music, the visual arts (scenery, costumes and special effects), drama (tragedy or comedy), and occasionally dance. The melding of these elements creates a multi-dimensional theatrical experience.

Opera has its roots in Greek drama and originated in Florence, Italy, in the late 1500's, with a small group of men who were members of the Camerata (Italian for society). The intellectuals, poets and musicians of the Camerata decided they wanted words to be a featured aspect of music. They used ancient Greek drama as their inspiration, including the use of a chorus to comment on the action.

The Camerata laid down three principles for their new art form:

1. The text must be understood; the accompaniment must be very simple and should not distract from the words.
2. The words must be sung with correct and natural declamation, as if they were spoken, and must avoid the rhythms of songs.
3. The melody must interpret the feeling of the text.

The first significant composer to fully develop the ideas of the Camerata was Jacopo Peri (1561-1633), whose opera *Dafne*, based on a Greek myth, was performed in 1594 and is regarded as the first opera.

Operas are divided into scenes and acts that contain different types of vocal pieces for one or many singers. An aria is a vocal solo that usually focuses on a character's emotions rather than actions. A recitative is sung dialogue or speech that occurs between arias and ensembles. It helps to further the action of the story and shape the relationships between the characters.

The story of the opera is written as a libretto: a text that is set to music. Composers write the score or the music for the opera. Sometimes the composer will also write the text of the



The Sydney Opera House

opera, but most often they work with a librettist. In the past, the libretto was also bound and sold to the audience. Today, the audience can easily follow the plot with the use of surtitles - the English translation of the libretto, which are projected onto a screen above the stage.

There are several differences between opera and musicals like *Phantom of the Opera*. One significant difference is the 'partnership' found between the music and the drama in an opera. While musicals use songs to help tell a story, in an opera, the music contributes to the drama, it does not only accompany it.

The musical style is another important difference between the two art forms; opera is usually classical and complex, while musicals feature pop songs and sometimes rock and roll. Also, singers in musicals have microphones hidden in their costumes or wigs to amplify their voices. The voices of opera singers are so strong no amplification is needed, even in a large venue. Furthermore, operas are almost completely sung while the use of spoken words are more common to musicals. There are some operas with spoken words and these are called singspiels (German) and opéra-comique (French). Examples are Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Bizet's *Carmen*, respectively.



The Metropolitan Opera (1937)

Bringing an Opera to the Stage

Opera combines many great art forms to make something completely different. First and foremost are the performers who portray characters by revealing their thoughts and emotions through the singing voice. The next very important component is a full symphony orchestra that accompanies the singing actors and actresses, helping them to portray the full range of emotions possible in the operatic format. The orchestra performs in an area in front of the singers called the orchestra pit, while the singers perform on the open area called the stage. Wigs, costumes, sets and specialized lighting further enhance these performances, all of which are designed, created, and executed by a team of highly trained artisans.

The creation of an opera begins with a dramatic scenario crafted by a playwright or dramaturg who, alone or with a librettist, fashions the script or libretto that contains the words the artists will sing. Working in tandem, the composer and librettist team up to create a cohesive musical drama in which the music and words work together to express the emotions revealed in the story. Following the completion of their work, the composer and librettist entrust their new work to a conductor who, with a team of assistants (*repetiteurs*), assumes responsibility for the musical preparation of the work. The conductor collaborates with a stage director (responsible for the visual component) in order to bring a performance of the new piece to life on the stage. The stage director and conductor form the creative spearhead for the new composition while assembling a design team which will take charge of the actual physical production.



Wendy Nielsen (*Tosca*) and Richard Margison (*Cavaradossi*), *Tosca*, Manitoba Opera, November 2010. Photo: R. Tinker

Set designers, lighting designers, costume designers, wig and makeup designers and even choreographers must all be brought on board to participate in the creation of the new production. The set designer combines the skills of both an artist and an architect using “blueprint” plans to design the actual physical set which will reside on the stage, recreating the physical setting required by the story line. These blueprints are turned over to a team of carpenters who are specially trained in the art of stage carpentry. Following the actual building of the set, painters, following instructions from the set designers’ original plans, paint the set. As the set is assembled on the stage, the lighting designer works with a team of electricians to throw light onto both the stage and the set in an atmospheric, as well as practical way. Using specialized lighting instruments, colored gels and a state-of-the-art computer, the designer, along with the stage director, create a “lighting plot” by writing “lighting cues” which are stored in the computer and used during the actual performance of the opera.

During this production period, the costume designer, in consultation with the stage director, has designed appropriate clothing for the singers to wear. These designs are fashioned into patterns and crafted by a team of highly skilled artisans called cutters, stitchers, and sewers. Each costume is specially made for each singer using his/her individual measurements. The wig and makeup designer, working with the costume designer, designs and creates wigs which will complement both the costume and the singer, as well as represent historically accurate period fashions.

The principals are the people who have the major roles in an opera. They are professional singers. Principals usually arrive about three weeks before the first performance, with all of their music memorized and a good sense of their character. In rehearsal, they work with the director who helps them block each of the scenes. The director works with the principals to develop their characters and their voice. For the first two weeks they are accompanied by a rehearsal pianist. The week of the show, they move into the Concert Hall and begin work rehearsing on stage with the orchestra in the pit.



Michel Corbeil (*Monostatos*), Andriana Chuchman (*Pamina*),
The Magic Flute, Manitoba Opera, April 2011. Photo: R. Tinker

The Operatic Voice and Professional Singing

Operatic singing, developed in Europe during the 17th century, places intense vocal demands on the singer. Opera singers rarely use microphones, and therefore must project their voices to fill a large theatre and be heard above an orchestra.

An opera singer learns to use his or her body as an amplification device. By controlling the muscles of the diaphragm, the singer can regulate the amount of breath used. The diaphragm expands and contracts, regulating the air that passes through the vocal cords, causing them to vibrate. The speed of this determines the pitch. As the sound passes through the mouth, it resonates in the upper chest cavities and the sinus cavities of the face and head. These cavities act as small echo chambers that amplify the sound.

Each person's vocal tract is constructed differently. The roles that a singer performs are dependent mostly upon their vocal range, but within the vocal ranges, there are many colours and weights of voice that contribute. Vocal colour refers to the richness of the sound and vocal weight refers to how powerful a voice sounds.

Many singers begin their operatic training in university. Opera students study singing, music history, composition and vocal pedagogy (voice teaching). In addition to music classes, they study diction and often at least one foreign language. After university, their first professional roles are usually small parts, but if they continue to study and train, they may move on to the bigger principal roles.

Professional singers develop a number of roles in their repertoire. Since the principal artists are required to have their parts memorized before rehearsals begin, singers must prepare well in advance of each contract. Even well established singers have voice teachers, and often acting coaches, who help them refine their singing techniques.

Physical health is a major priority to a singer. Contrary to popular belief, not all opera singers are overweight. Opera singers once believed that excessive weight gave added volume and richness to the voice. However, now we know that physical fitness can give similar benefits to a voice. Plus, the overall health benefits of being in shape overshadow any loss of vocal power. Most singers, like professional athletes, try to avoid tobacco, alcohol, and caffeine.

VOCAL CATEGORIES

Women

SOPRANO: Similar to a flute in range and tone colour. Usually plays the heroine in the opera since a high, bright sound can easily suggest youth and innocence.

MEZZO-SOPRANO: Similar to an oboe in range and tone colour. Called an alto in choral arrangements, this voice can play a wide variety of characters including gypsies, mothers, and young men (trouser role).

CONTRALTO: Similar to an English horn in range and tone colour. Usually play unique roles including fortune-tellers, witches, and older women.

Men

TENOR: Similar to a trumpet in range, tone, color and acoustical "ring." Usually plays the hero or the romantic lead in the opera.

BARITONE: Similar to a French horn in tone color. Often plays the leader of mischief in comic opera or the villain in tragic opera, sometimes even the hero.

BASS: Similar to a trombone or bassoon in tone color. Usually portrays old, wise men, or foolish, comic men.

HIGHER

LOWER

VOCAL COLOURINGS

COLORATURA: A light, bright voice that has the ability to sing many notes quickly, usually with an extended upper range.

LYRIC: A light to medium weight voice, often singing beautiful sweeping melodies.

DRAMATIC: Dark, heavy and powerful voice, capable of sustained and forceful singing.

Glossary: Important Words in Opera

ACT: a section of the opera that is then divided into scenes.

ARIA: means “air” in Italian. This is a piece of music written for a one singer (soloist), usually with instrumental accompaniment.

ASIDE: a secret comment from an actor directly to the audience that the other characters cannot hear.

BARITONE: the middle singing range of the male voice.

BASS: the lowest singing range of the male voice.

BASSO BUFFO: a bass singer who specializes in comic characters.

BASSO PROFUNDO: the most serious bass voice.

BATON: short stick that the conductor uses to lead the orchestra.

BEL CANTO: Italian phrase literally meaning “beautiful singing.” A traditional Italian style of singing emphasizing tone, phrasing, coloratura passages, and technique. Also refers to the operas written in this style.

BLOCKING: directions given to the performers for movement on stage.

BRAVO: a form of appreciation shouted by audience members at the end of a particularly pleasing performance. Technically, bravo refers to a male performer, brava refers to a female performer and bravi refers to many performers.

BUFFO: from the Italian for “buffoon.” A singer of comic roles (basso-buffo) or a comic opera (opera-buffa.)

CADENZA: a passage of singing, often at the end of an aria, which shows off the singer’s vocal ability.

CASTRATO: a castrated male prized for his high singing voice.

CHOREOGRAPHER: the person who designs the steps of a dance.

CHORUS: a group of singers of all vocal ranges, singing together to support the vocal leads.

CLASSICAL: the period in music which comes after the Baroque and before the Romantic, roughly from the birth of Mozart to shortly after the death of Beethoven. It represents the greatest standardization in orchestral form and tonality.

COLORATURA: elaborate ornamentation of music written for a singer using many fast notes and trills. Also used to describe a singer who sings this type of music.



Jeffrey Springer (*Turiddu*), *Pagliacci*, Manitoba Opera, April 2004. Photo: R.Tinker

COMPOSER: the individual who writes all the music for both voice and instrument.

COMPRIMARIO: a nineteenth century term referring to secondary or supporting roles such as confidantes, messengers, and matchmakers.

CONTRALTO: the lowest female voice range.

CONDUCTOR: the person responsible for the musical interpretation and coordination of the performance. The conductor controls the tempo, the dynamic level, and the balance between singers and orchestra. You will see this person standing in the orchestra pit conducting the musicians and the singers.

COUNTERTENOR: a male singer with the highest male voice range, generally singing within the female contralto or mezzo-soprano range.

CRESCENDO: a build in the volume or dynamic of the music.

CUE: a signal to enter or exit from the stage, to move or to change lighting or scenery; or a signal given by the conductor to the musicians.



Jeff Mattsey (*Don Giovanni*) and Stefan Szkafarowsky (*Commendatore*), *Don Giovanni*, Manitoba Opera, November 2003. Photo: R.Tinker

CURTAIN CALL: occurs at the end of the performance when all the cast members and the conductor take bows. This can occur in front of the curtain or on the open stage.

DESIGNER: a production can have two or three designers: a lighting designer, a costume designer, a set designer, or someone who is both costume and set designer. They work closely with the stage director to give the production a distinctive look.

DIVA: literally *goddess* in Italian. An important female opera star. The masculine form is *divo*.

DRESS REHEARSAL: the final rehearsal before opening night, includes costumes, lights, makeup, etc. Sometimes it is necessary to stop for adjustments, but an attempt is made to make it as much like a regular performance as possible.

DUET: music that is written for two people to sing together.

ENCORE: a piece that is performed after the last scheduled piece of a concert. An encore is usually performed because the audience wants to hear more music even though the concert is over.

ENSEMBLE: a part of the opera written for a group of two or more singers. This may or may not include the chorus.

FALSETTO: the upper part of a voice in which the vocal cords do not vibrate completely. Usually used by males to imitate a female voice.

FINALE: the last musical number of an opera or an act.

GRAND OPERA: spectacular French opera of the Romantic period, lavishly staged, with a historically based plot, a huge cast, an unusually large orchestra, and ballet. It also refers to opera without spoken dialogue.

HELDEN: German prefix meaning "heroic." Can also apply to other voices, but usually used in "heldentenor."

HOUSE: the auditorium and front of the theatre excluding the stage and backstage areas.

IMPRESARIO: the proprietor, manager, or conductor of an opera or concert company; one who puts on or sponsors an entertainment manager, producer.

INTERLUDE: a short piece of instrumental music played between scenes and acts.

INTERMISSION: a break between acts of an opera. The lights go on and the audience is free to move around.

LIBRETTIST: the writer of the opera's text.

LIBRETTO: Italian for *little book*. It is the text or story of the opera.

LYRIC: used to describe a light-to-medium-weight voice with an innocent quality, capable of both sustained, forceful singing and delicate effects.

MAESTRO: means "master" in Italian. Used as a courtesy title for the conductor (male or female).

MARK: to sing, but not at full voice. A full-length opera is very hard on a singer's voice, so most performers mark during rehearsals. During the dress rehearsal singers try to sing at full voice for part, if not all, of the rehearsal.

MEZZO-SOPRANO: the middle singing range for a female voice.

MOTIF OR LEITMOTIF: a recurring musical theme used to identify an emotion, person, place, or object.

OPERA: a dramatic presentation which is set to music. Almost all of it is sung, and the orchestra is an equal partner with the singers. Like a play, an opera is acted on stage with costumes, scenery, makeup, etc. Opera is the plural form of the Latin word *opus*, which means "work."

OPERA BUFFA: an opera about ordinary people, usually, but not always comic. First developed in the 18th century.

OPERA SERIA: a serious opera. The usual characters are gods and goddesses, or ancient heroes.

OPERA-COMIQUE: (singspiel) a form of opera which contains spoken dialogue.

OPERETTA: lighthearted opera with spoken dialogue, such as a musical.

ORCHESTRA: an ensemble, led by a conductor, that is comprised of string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments.

ORCHESTRA PIT: sunken area in front of the stage where the orchestra sits.

OVERTURE: an orchestral introduction to the opera played before the curtain rises. Usually longer than a prelude and can be played as a separate piece.

PITCH: how high or low a note sounds.

PRELUDE: a short introduction that leads into an act without pause.

PRIMA DONNA: literally *first lady* in Italian. The leading woman in an opera. Because of the way some of them behaved in the past, it often refers to someone who is acting in a superior and demanding fashion. The term for a leading man is *primo uomo*.

PRINCIPAL: a major singing role, or the singer who performs such a role.

PRODUCTION: the combination of sets, costumes, props, and lights, etc.

PROPS: objects carried or used on stage by the performers.

PROSCENIUM: the front opening of the stage which frames the action.

QUARTET: four singers or the music that is written for four singers.

RAKED STAGE: a stage that slants downwards towards the audience.

RECITATIVE: lines of dialogue that are sung, usually with no recognizable melody. It is used to advance the plot.

REHEARSAL: a working session in which the singers prepare for public performance.

SCORE: the written music of an opera or other musical work.

SERENADE: a piece of music honouring someone or something, an extension of the traditional performance of a lover beneath the window of his mistress.

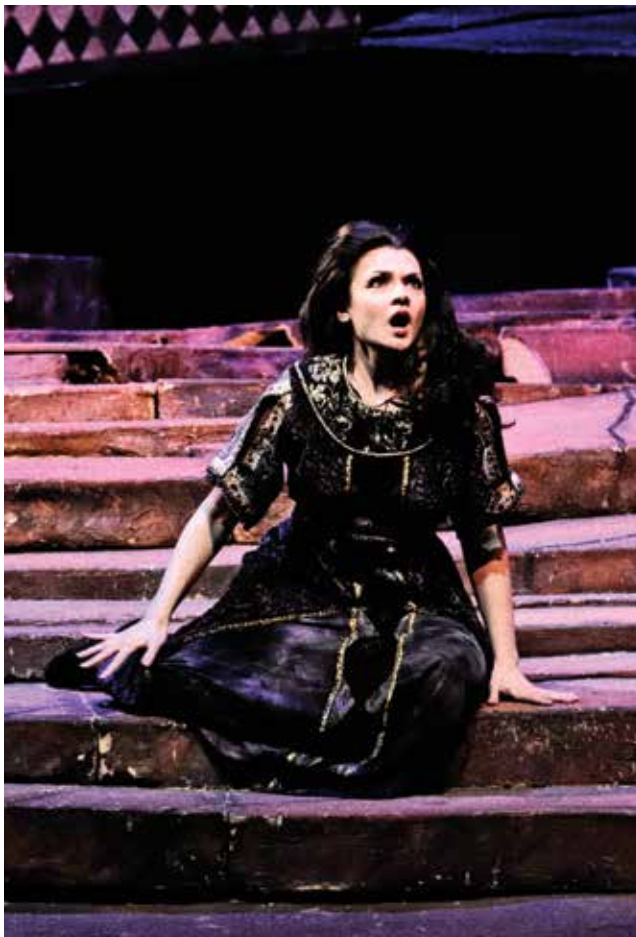
SITZPROBE: the rehearsal held on to the main stage for the first time. The entire opera is sung through without any costumes or blocking.

SOPRANO: the highest range of the female singing voice.

SOUBRETTE: pert young female character with a light soprano voice.

SPINTO: a lyric voice that has the power and incisiveness for dramatic climaxes.

STAGE AREAS: refers to the various sections of the stage as seen by those on stage.



Andriana Chuchman (*Pamina*), *The Magic Flute*, Manitoba Opera, April 2011. Photo: R.Tinker

STAGE DIRECTOR: the person in charge of the action on stage. He or she shows the singers, chorus and cast where and when to move and helps them create their characters. The stage director develops a concept for how the entire performance should look and feel. He or she works closely with the stage managers, lighting designer, set designers, costume designer, and wig and makeup artists to bring his or her vision into reality.

STAGE MANAGER: the person who coordinates and manages elements of the performance.

SUPERNUMERARIES: appear on stage in costume in non-singing and usually, non-speaking roles.

SURTITLES: the English translations of the opera's language, in this production Italian, that are projected above the stage during a performance to help the audience follow the story, much like subtitles in a foreign film.

SYNOPSIS: a short summary of the story of the opera.

TABLEAU: occurs at the end of a scene or act, when all cast members on stage freeze in position and remain that way until the curtain closes. It looks as though that moment has been captured in a photograph.

TEMPO: speed of the music.

TENOR: the highest natural adult male voice.

TRILL: very quick alternation between two adjacent notes. See coloratura.

TRIO: an ensemble of three singers or the music that is written for three singers.

TROUSER ROLE: the role of an adolescent boy or young man, written for and sung by a woman, often a mezzo-soprano. Also known as a pants role.

VERISMO: describes a realistic style of opera that started in Italy at the end of the 19th century.

Audience Etiquette

The following will help you (and those around you) enjoy the experience of a night at the opera:

- Dress to be comfortable. Many people enjoy dressing up in formal attire, but this is optional and people attend the opera wearing all varieties of clothing.
- Arrive on time. Latecomers disturb the singers and others in the audience. Latecomers will only be seated at suitable breaks - often not until intermission.
- Find your seat with the help of your teacher or an usher and remember to thank them.
- Remove your hat. This is customary and is respectful to the artists and to people sitting behind you.
- Turn off, tune in. Switch off all electronic devices including cell phones, smart phones, iPods, pagers, and digital watch alarms.
- Leave your camera at home and do not use the camera function on your phone during a performance. This can be very disturbing to the artists and audience members.
- Find the “EXIT” signs. Look for the illuminated signs over the doors. You always want to know where the nearest emergency exit is in a theatre.
- If you think you might need a breath mint or cough drop, unwrap it before the performance.
- Settle in and get comfortable before the performance begins. Read your program. This tells you what performance you’re about to see, who created it, and who’s performing in it. You might like to read a synopsis of the opera before it begins.
- Clap as the lights are dimmed and the conductor appears and bows to the audience. Watch as the conductor then turns to the orchestra and takes up his or her baton to signal the beginning of the opera.
- Listen to the prelude or overture before the curtain rises. It is part of the performance and an opportunity to identify common musical themes that may reoccur during the opera.
- Save all conversations, eating, drinking, and chewing gum, for the intermission. Talking and eating can be disruptive to other audience members and distracts from your ability to be absorbed by the show. The audience is critical to the success of the show – without you, there can be no performance.
- Sit still. Only whisper when it is absolutely necessary, as a whisper is heard all over the theatre, and NEVER stand during the performance, except in the case of an emergency.
- Read the English translations projected above the stage.
- Feel free to laugh when something is funny – this is a performance and you are expected to respond!
- Listen for subtleties in the music. The tempo, volume and complexity of the music and singing often depict the “feeling” or “sense” of the action or character.
- Notice repeated words or phrases; they are usually significant.
- Applaud (or shout Bravo!) at the end of an aria or chorus piece to show your enjoyment of it. The end of a piece can be identified by a pause in the music.
- Finally, have fun and enjoy the show!

Manitoba Opera

Manitoba Opera was founded in 1969 by a group of individuals dedicated to presenting the great works of opera to Manitoban audiences. Manitoba Opera is the province's only full-time professional opera company. The company attracts internationally renowned artists, highlights the best local talent, and is supported by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra under the direction of internationally renowned conductors. Manitoba Opera celebrated its 35th Season in 2007/08 by presenting the world premiere of an opera commissioned by the company, *Transit of Venus*.

Chorus

The Manitoba Opera Chorus, under the direction of Chorus Master Tadeusz Biernacki, is hailed for their excellent singing and acting abilities. The chorus boasts a core of skilled singers who give generously of their time and talents. Some are voice majors at university, a few are singing teachers, but most work in jobs that aren't music related.



Carmen, Manitoba Opera, April 2010. Photo: R.Tinker

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Student Activities

Activity #1: Using the Five C's, Have your Students Analyze the Opera as Drama

CHARACTERS: Are they interesting? Believable? Are their actions, words, thoughts consistent?

CONFLICT: What conflicts are established? How are they resolved?

CLIMAX: To what climax does the conflict lead?

CONCLUSION: How well does the conclusion work? Is it consistent? Satisfying? Believable?

CONTEXT: What are the historical, physical, and emotional settings? Sets and costumes?

- Give students the synopsis to read and have them re-tell the story after they have read it.
- Ask comprehensive questions.
- Present and discuss the composer and librettist.
- Listen to excerpts from the opera. Watch a DVD of the opera. Have students identify and recognize recurring themes.
- Discuss the historical background, emphasizing the visual and performing arts and history-social science frameworks. Discuss the results of certain events. Whom did they affect? How? Why? Did any changes occur as a result?
- Review the glossary of terms.
- Have the students watch for references to themes in the opera in their everyday lives. The internet, radio, TV, magazines, and movies often refer back to classics.

Activity #2: Create a Poster, Set, Costume, Press Release, or Ad

- Choose a time and place to set your production.
- Have the students design a poster for *Aida* Student Night at the Opera, including such details as the date, the time, and the people involved.
- Have them draw a set for a production of the opera.
- They might also sketch a costume, wig, and makeup for a character in *Aida*.
- Have the students write a press release about *Aida* Student Night at the Opera, including the date, the time, the people involved, and why it would be exciting or fun to attend.
- Have the students create an ad for the opera. Include whatever you feel is the biggest “selling point” of the opera - what makes it exciting? Why should people come to see it?

Activity #3: A Review

Step 1 – Think-Group-Share

Individually, students will write, in point form, the answers to the following questions:

1. What did you like about the opera? What did you dislike?
2. What did you think about the sets, props, and costumes?
3. If you were the stage director, would you have done something differently? Why?
4. What were you expecting? Did it live up to your expectations?
5. What did you think of the singers' portrayal of their characters?

Break the students into groups to discuss their feelings and reactions to the production. Have the students write on poster papers their answers or important points of their discussion. Encourage the students to go beyond the questions posed.

Step 2 – Class Discussion

Have the whole class examine the poster papers and discuss the different ideas from each group.

Step 3 – Outlining your review

Go over the essential aspects of a review including: a clearly stated purpose, a coherent comparison/contrast organizational pattern, a summary paragraph capturing the interest of the reader, precise nouns, revision for consistency of ideas. You might give your students a few samples of reviews for fine arts events – or ask them to bring in some reviews they find themselves. Have the students fill out the review outline, then complete a rough draft.

1. Purpose (why are you writing this and who is your audience?)
2. Plot Synopsis (including who sang what role, etc.)
3. Paragraph 1 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
4. Paragraph 2 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
5. Paragraph 3 (compare and contrast things you liked or didn't like)
6. Summary/Closing Paragraph

Step 4 - Peer Conferencing

Students will exchange reviews to critique and edit. Encourage the students to focus on effective coordination of ideas in sentences and the correct use of grammar and punctuation.

Step 5 - Creating the final draft

Have students make the appropriate adjustments to their reviews. You could also have the students type the pieces and organize them into a newspaper.

Activity #4: Have your students act out the story

Have students consider the characters and the role they play in the story. Choose one of the following:

AIDA | AMNERIS | RADAMES | RAMFIS | AMONASRO | THE KING OF EGYPT

If you were going to play this character, you would have to discover, create, and imagine background, personality, and physical qualities. Some clues are provided in the story and the music and some you need to make up yourself.

Pretend you are that character and answer the following questions:

1. What motivates you? How does this affect your actions? What obstacles stand in your way?
2. What steps in the opera do you take to achieve your objectives? What are the results?
3. What obstacles are beyond your control (laws, social status, others' actions)?
4. What are your (character's) greatest strengths? Greatest weaknesses?
5. What is your relationship to the other characters?
6. How is the character's personality expressed through the music of the opera?
7. Can you think of a modern-day character who has similar characteristics and traits?
8. If this character were alive today, how would s/he be more or less successful?
9. What different steps would s/he take to achieve an objective?

Activity #5: Write a Biography

Have students research and write a biography of the playwright, composer, librettist or one of the characters.

Activity #6: Create a Journal or Blog from the Point of View of a Character

Have the students choose a point of conflict, and write a journal or blog of those events from a character's point of view. What does Aida think of live as a slave? How does Amneris feel when she finds out that Radames does not love her, but instead loves her slave, etc.?

Activity #7: Write a Letter from One Character to Another

Have the students choose a moment in the story and have one character write a letter to another, giving them advice for the future. Ethical questions raised by the plot or characters can be addressed.

Activity #8: Cast *Aida*

Have the students cast modern-day singers or bands as the performers in *Aida*. Who did you choose? What are their costumes like? What did you base your decisions on?

Activity #9: Tweet About *Aida*

Have the students tweet about *Aida* Student Night by writing out a twitter in 140 characters. Have students read their tweet aloud to the class and post them to Manitoba Opera's Facebook wall. Try to be clever, funny, or start a conversation.

Activity #10: Patriotism

Have students define and discuss the word "patriotism."

Consider questions like: What does it mean to be patriotic? Is patriotism as prominent today as it has been throughout history? What are the pros and cons of patriotism? What effect did patriotism have on the characters of Radames and Aida?

Activity #11: *Aida* Mood Board

Often before artists and designers create their work, they make a mood board to set the tone for the piece. This is usually a poster-sized piece of paper covered in images and words, usually torn from the pages of magazines and newspapers, that together communicates the complex mood of the piece in a way that words can't. It's the same as making a collage, except a mood board is for the purpose of communicating a focused concept.

Have your students go through a stack of old magazines and newspapers to create a mood board for *Aida*. They can create one each or work together on a large one for the class. Consider elements like colours, textures, phrases, faces, patterns, and images that represent the opera.

Activity #12: Opera Comprehension Tests

The Opera

1. _____ A theatrical production incorporating both vocal and instrumental music, drama, and sometimes dance.
2. _____ The lowest male vocal range.
3. _____ An instrumental introduction to an opera.
4. _____ The area where the orchestra is seated.
5. _____ Considered the first opera.
6. _____ A song for solo voice in an opera.
7. _____ The highest female vocal range.
8. _____ A song for two voices.
9. _____ The lowest female vocal range.
10. _____ The Italian word meaning "little book."
11. _____ The middle male vocal range.
12. _____ He/she is in charge of all the action on the stage.

Aida

1. In which city was the premiere performance of Verdi's *Aida*? _____
2. In what year did it premiere? _____
3. Which two countries are in conflict in the story of *Aida*? _____
4. Where does this four-act tragedy take place? _____
5. What are the names of the two women who are in love with Radames? _____
6. The role of Aida is sung by a _____ (name the singing voice).
7. The role of Radames is sung by a _____ (name the singing voice).
8. Who is the composer? _____
9. What language is the opera performed in? _____
10. Who will sing the role of Aida in Manitoba Opera's production of *Aida*? _____

Answer Key

General Opera

1. Opera
2. Bass
3. Overture
4. Orchestra pit or “the pit”
5. *Daphne*
6. Aria
7. Soprano
8. Duet
9. Contralto
10. Libretto
11. Baritone
12. Stage director

Aida

1. Cairo
2. 1871
3. Egypt and Ethiopia
4. Egypt
5. Aida and Amneris
6. Soprano
7. Tenor
8. Giuseppe Verdi
9. Italian
10. Michele Capalbo

Manitoba Opera would be pleased to receive a copy of any work related to this opera produced by your students. Please forward to:

Education Coordinator, Manitoba Opera, 1060 - 555 Main St., Winnipeg, MB R3B 1C3

or

ldymond@manitobaopera.mb.ca

Winnipeg Public Library

Resources

Books

The New Grove Masters of Italian Operas:
Rossini, Donizetti, Bellini, Verdi, Puccini
[by Philip Gossett et al.]
New York: Norton, c1983
Call No.: 782.1092 NEW

The Life of Verdi [by John Rosselli]
New York: Cambridge University Press,
c2000
Call No.: B Verdi (Biography)

Sopranos, mezzos, tenors, basses, and
other friends [by Schuyler Chapin]
New York: Crown, c1995
Call No.: 782.1092 CHA

Verdi with a vengeance: an energetic
guide to the life and complete works of
the king of opera [by William Berger]
New York: Vintage Books, 2000
Call No.: 782.1092 VERDI

The Ancient Egypt Guide [by William J.
Murnane]
Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 2012
Call No.: 916.2 MUR 2012

Egypt in the Age of the Pyramids [by
Yvonne J. Markowitz]
Boston, Mass: MFA Publications, c2002
Call No.: 709.32 MAR

Scores

Aida: opera in four acts / music by
Giuseppe Verdi ; libretto by Antonio
Ghislanzoni ; English translation by
Walter Ducloux
New York: G. Schirmer, c1963
Call No.: SCORE 782.1 VER

Aida: complete arrangement for voice and
pianoforte / music by Giuseppe Verdi ;
arranged by M. Saladino ; libretto by Antonio
Ghislanzoni ; English version by Charles L.
Kenney
Milan, Italy: Ricordi, c1998
Call No.: SCORE 782.1 VER

Sound Recordings

Aida [Verdi]
England: EMI Records, [1974], p2010
Call No.: CD OPERA VERDI AID

Aida [Verdi]
RCA/BMG, [1955], c1968
Call No.: CD OPERA VERDI AID

Verdi / [sung by] Andrea Bocelli
Philips/Sugar, p2000
Call No.: CD OPERA VERDI OPE

DVD Recordings

Aida [Verdi]
Metropolitan Opera Association, c1988 ;
Deutsche Grammophon, p1991.
Call No.: DVD 792.542 AID

Aida [Verdi]
TDK Marketing, c2006
Call No.: DVD 792.542 AID



1908 poster for *Aida* performed by the Hippodrome Opera Company
of Cleveland, Ohio

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Aida (study guide). Calgary Opera. 13 Aug 2012. <<http://www.calgaryopera.com/Aida%20Study%20Guide.pdf>>

Your Guide to Aida. Edmonton Opera. 21 Jan 2013. <<http://www.edmontonopera.com/pdf/discover/education/2012/Your%20Guide%20to%20Aida.pdf>>

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Ticket to the Opera [by Phil G. Goulding]. New York: Fawcett Books, 1996

About Ancient Egypt. Tour Egypt. 10 Aug 2012. < <http://www.touregypt.net/ancientegypt/>>

Life in Ancient Egypt. [by Leigh T. Denault]. 15 Aug 2012. < <http://www.watson.org/~leigh/egypt.html>>

Insiders Egypt. [by Joyce Tyldesley]. New York: Simon & Schuster Books, 2007.

“How Pyramids Work.” [by Craig Freudenrich, Ph. D.]. 7 Jan 2013 <<http://www.science.howstuffworks.com/engineering/structural/pyramid.html>>

“Nubia.” Education Development Center. 18 Jan 2013. <http://www.nubianet.org/about/about_people1.html>

“Ancient Jugs hold the Secret to Practical Mathematics in Biblical Times” American Friends of Tel Aviv University. 5 Feb 2013 <<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/06/120604125603.htm>>

“Clothing and Adornment” Canadian Museum of Civilization. 5 Feb 2013 <<http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/exhibitions/civil/egypt/egcl06e.shtml>>

Egyptian Rhythm. [by Moustafa Gadalla]. A Tehuti Research Foundation Publication, 2002.

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(General)

This study guide was compiled accumulatively and includes information from the following sources accessed at various unknown dates since 2000:

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The Billboard Illustrated Encyclopedia of Opera
The Canadian Opera Company
Encyclopedia of Manitoba
Encyclopedia of the Opera by David Ewen
Fort Worth Opera Study Guide
GradeSaver.com
La Scena
Lyric Opera of Kansas City
Manitoba Archives
Metropolitan Opera
musicwithease.com
Music.MSN.com
New York City Opera
Opera America Learning Centre
operabuffa.com; Opera Columbus Study Guide
Opera News
Operas Every Child Should Know
Opera Lyra Ottawa Study Guide
Opera Today
Orchestra London Study Guide
Pacific Opera
San Diego Opera Study Guide
San Francisco Opera Guild Study Guide
schubincave.com
A Season of Opera
Skeletons from the Opera Closet
timelines.com
Tulsa Opera Study Guide
University of Chicago Press
University of Manitoba
University of Texas
University of Waterloo
Rimrock Study Guide
Virginia Opera Study Guide
Winnipeg Free Press
Wikipedia
The World's Great Operas