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Giuseppe Verdi, *Aida by Antonio Ghislanzoni, music by Giuseppe Verdi* [1871]



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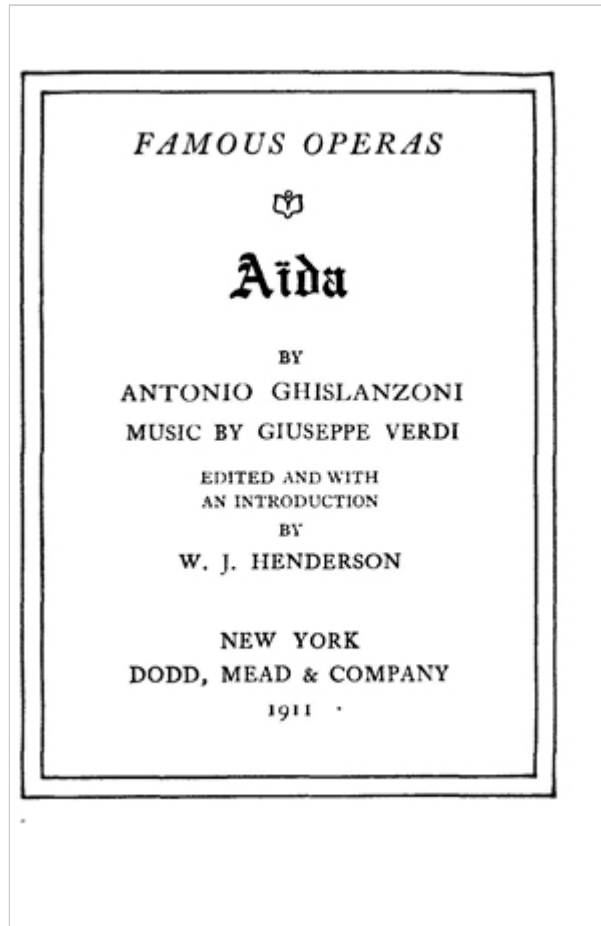
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Edition Used:

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Author: [Antonio Ghislanzoni](#)

Introduction: [William James Henderson](#)

About This Title:

A side-by-side Italian and English edition of the libretto. Famously first performed in Egypt in 1871, Aida, an Ethiopian princess, has been enslaved in Egypt. Her father has invaded Egypt in order to free her but he is defeated. A love triangle develops between Aida, a young warrior Rhadames, and Amneris, the Egyptian king's daughter. Aida and the persecuted Rhadames choose death together rather than be separated.

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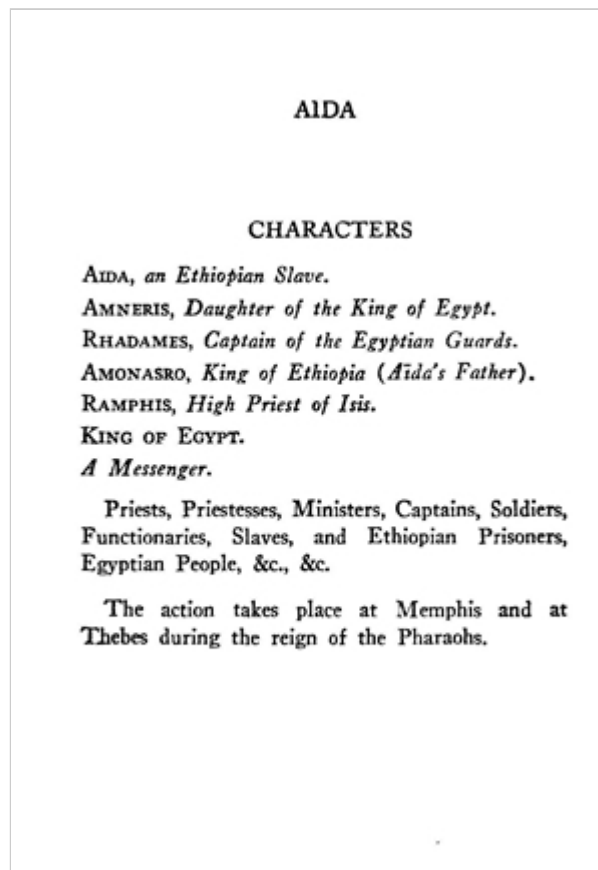


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INTRODUCTION

VERDI'S "Aïda" has come to be the most popular of his operas in this country and one of the most loved of all Italian lyric dramas. The gorgeousness of the coloring in its oriental pictures, the kaleidoscopic succession of brilliant scenes, the ballets, processions, the glitter of court life and "the pomp, the pride, the circumstance of war" unite with its music to make it an opera for the people as well as for the more conservative connoisseur. The fluent melody of its score appeals to popular taste, while the technical skill shown in the arrangement of its general plan and the harmonious disposition of all its details arouse the admiration of the most critical observer.

This story is well suited to operatic treatment and the history of the conception and development of the work is interesting. The action of the opera takes place in Memphis and Thebes, Egypt, in the days of the Pharaohs. The drama begins in the palace at Memphis. *Ramphis*, the high priest, informs *Rhadames* that the Ethiopians have arisen against Egypt and that Isis has selected the commander of the defending force. When the Priest has finished, *Rhadames* declares that he would gladly go forth to conquer, could he but return to *Aïda*, the slave of the King's daughter, *Amneris*. *Aïda* and *Amneris* come upon the scene, and we learn that the princess suspects the existence of the passion between the other two and is jealous. She determines to have revenge if she finds that she is right in her surmise. The court assembles and the King receives a messenger, who announces that *Amonasro* is leading the Ethiopians. The King announces *Rhadames* as his General and *Amneris* gives him a banner. Only *Aïda* knows that *Amonasro* is her father, and when all the others have gone, she remains to pray to her gods for pity.

The next scene shows us *Rhadames* in the temple receiving his consecrated sword from the hands of *Ramphis*, the Priest, while the ceremonials of adoration proceed. With the beginning of the second act the incidents are transferred to Thebes. The war is over and the army is about to return. *Amneris* reclines in her apartment and grieves over the absence of *Rhadames*. When *Aïda* enters, *Amneris*, seeking to probe her heart, tells her that *Rhadames* is dead. *Aïda* reveals her love and *Amneris* breathes vengeance.

The second scene takes place in the great square. *Rhadames* returns triumphant, bringing several Ethiopian prisoners. One is *Amonasro*, but the conquerors do not know that he is the King. When *Rhadames* learns that *Amonasro* is *Aïda*'s father, he joins others in begging for his life. The King, after listening to the advice of the Priest, releases all save *Amonasro*, who is condemned to remain in slavery with his daughter. The King then precipitates the tragedy of the opera by giving the hand of *Amneris* to *Rhadames* in recognition of his great national services.

The third act is in one scene and takes place on the banks of the Nile. *Amneris* enters the temple of Isis to pray on the eve of her marriage. *Aïda* comes to keep an appointment with *Rhadames* and bewails her expatriation. *Amonasro* enters and

commands her to use her power over *Rhadames* to make him disclose the Egyptian plans. She refuses, but in a stormy duet her father overpowers her reluctance. He retires and *Rhadames* enters. *Aïda* woos him to flight and consenting he reveals the Egyptian plans. *Amonasro* now comes forward, and, saying that he has heard the secret, informs *Rhadames* that he is the King. *Amneris* comes from the temple just in time to overhear some of this. *Amonasro* attempts to stab her, but is prevented by *Rhadames*, who sends *Aïda* and her father away, while he remains to surrender himself to the Priest.

The fourth act has two scenes. The first takes place in a room adjoining that in which *Rhadames* is to be tried. When he is brought on at the request of *Amneris*, she begs him to give up *Aïda* so that she herself may save him. He refuses. She says that *Amonasro* has been slain and that *Aïda* has fled, but he repulses her. She now falls into despair over the outcome of her own actions. *Rhadames* is tried by the Priests and condemned to be buried alive. As the Priests pass out with their prisoner *Amneris* curses them.

The second scene shows us the vault under the temple and also the temple above it. *Rhadames*, shut in the vault, prays for *Aïda*, but she has succeeded in gaining admittance to the tomb in order that she may share his fate. They sing out their lives in the suffocating place, while above them the priestesses of the temple chant and *Amneris* kneels in grief on the stone which seals the tomb.

This admirable operatic story was utilized by the composer in a work which astounded the entire world by its revelation of unexpected qualities of his genius and which revolutionized modern Italian opera. Giuseppe Verdi was born at the village of Roncole, near Busseto, Italy, on Oct. 9, 1813. It was the year in which Wagner was born, and these two men were destined to reform the whole method of operatic composition in the later years of the nineteenth century. Verdi received some instruction from local musicians and finally in 1831 applied for admission to the conservatory at Milan, but the director rejected him on the ground that he had no talent for music. So he studied privately in the Lombardy metropolis and later went back to Busseto as organist and conductor of the local musical society.

In 1838, with a wife and two children, he went to Milan with an opera, and Merelli, director of La Scala, produced it. Then he commissioned Verdi to write more operas. The first, a comic opera, had to be finished just when the composer had lost his wife and children. Small wonder that it was a failure. Verdi wished to abandon composition, but Merelli persuaded him to go on, and he wrote his "Nabucco," which was applauded at La Scala on March 9, 1842. Other compositions followed, but Verdi's first general success was "Ernani," brought out in 1844 and performed in 15 places within nine months.

Several operas of no striking force, and now forgotten, except for occasional revivals in Italy, were now written by Verdi, and then he suddenly seemed to find himself, for in 1851 he wrote "Rigoletto" in 40 days, and this popular work was followed by "Il Trovatore," first sung in Rome, Jan. 19, 1853, and "La Traviata," produced in Venice, March 6, of the same year. These operas raised Verdi at once to the position of the

foremost living composer of Italian opera, and if he had never produced anything else, they would have ensured for him a place beside such masters as Donizetti and Bellini and perhaps even Rossini.

These works are classed by commentators as belonging to the second period of Verdi's artistic development, which is characterized by tremendous vigor and a remarkable melodic fecundity, together with certain rather indefinite powers of characterization. But the Verdi of clear-cut characterization and keen psychological insight was not disclosed till later.

For eighteen years he continued from time to time to put forth new works, but none of them made any lasting impression. "Un Ballo in Maschera" (Rome, Feb. 17, 1859) is sometimes given outside of Italy, but its silly libretto is inimical to its wide acceptance. "La Forza del Destino" (St. Petersburg, Nov. 10, 1862) is mentioned with bated breath by some opera-goers of the older generation, but it has been permitted to repose in silence in this country since its revival by Mapleson at the Academy of Music many years ago.

In this last opera, however, the student can discern the beginnings of a transition. Verdi's instrumentation had been cheap, and for the most part vulgar and noisy. It was generally no more than a dynamic development of the "big guitar," into which Donizetti had made the orchestra. Those who listened attentively to the instrumental portions of "Il Trovatore" and "Rigoletto" will readily understand what is meant by this. But in "La Forza del Destino" one finds sudden displays of real skill in the use of orchestral color for the purposes of dramatic delineation. The infrequent hints at progress toward finesse in the handling of instruments here became almost promises, and yet no one was prepared for the striking advance revealed in the score of "Aida" in 1871.

This opera marked the entrance of Verdi upon a new phase of his artistic career. It instantly set him apart from all other Italian composers. It made him the father of the contemporaneous school of "young Italians" from Mascagni to Puccini. None of them have added anything to the materials or methods applied to the constitution of Italian opera by Verdi in his "Aida."

This opera was followed by the famous Manzoni Requiem, produced in 1874. In 1887 at Milan on Feb. 5 was given for the first time his next opera, "Otello" and again connoisseurs all over the world learned that this wonderful old man was making progress in his art. But he was to amaze the world yet once more, for in 1893, at the age of 80, he produced his comic opera "Falstaff," which has been awarded a place beside Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro" and Wagner's "Die Meistersinger." This stupendous tour de force was his last, for thereafter he wrote only some religious music (very noble music, too), but turned his face away from the glitter of the theatre. He lived in the seclusion of his Villa St. Agata at Busseto and there he passed away on Jan. 27, 1901.

Let us now bestow a little more particular attention on the circumstances in which "Aida" was created, first performed and accepted by the world as a masterpiece.

Ismail Pacha, khedive of Egypt, a man of picturesque personality and brilliant ambition, ardently desired to be known as a leader in the polite world of European aristocracy. Among other enterprises looking to the accomplishment of his aim, he undertook the building of the opera house at Cairo. It was opened with much ceremony in 1869. But Ismail Pacha was not satisfied. What his opera house needed to make it celebrated throughout the world was a new opera on an Egyptian subject, expressly composed for this theatre by the most celebrated living master. An emissary was despatched to Verdi, who did not regard the proposition with favor. Not wishing to affront a potentate by a direct refusal, he named a price of such size that he was certain the Khedive would be frightened off, but Ismail accepted the terms without hesitation. Then Verdi began to contemplate his task, and as the possibilities of splendid musical color offered by an Egyptian subject opened before his mind, he became enamored of the idea and entered into the project with enthusiasm.

Mariette Bey, a distinguished Egyptologist, was requested by the Khedive to find a suitable story. He did find an incident in the ancient history of the country and from it he planned the groundwork of the libretto of the opera. Camille du Locle, a Parisian, wrote out the lyrics and the dialogue in French prose. He worked at Busseto by the side of Verdi, who was thus enabled to bring to the new work his long experience in the construction of operas. The arrangement of the last scene with the double stage showing the temple and the vault under it was entirely the design of the composer. Signor A. Ghislanzoni translated the prose of du Locle into Italian and at the same time turned it into verse, suitable for musical setting. This Italian verse was afterward retranslated into French verse for Parisian performances.

Verdi began his labors with vigor and his opera was completed within the allotted time. The Khedive had offered him \$20,000 for the work, and \$10,000 more if he would go to Egypt to conduct the first performance. Verdi intended to do so, but when the time arrived he refused. The great master had a mortal fear of seasickness. The opera was to have been produced in 1870, but the scenery had been painted in Paris, and when the Franco-Prussian War broke out, it could not be taken out of the city. Verdi occupied himself with alterations and improvements in his opera. For one thing he eliminated a chorus in the style of his famous predecessor Palestrina, for whom all his life he had a profound admiration and of whose music he was a continual student. But he felt that the Italian ecclesiastic style was not quite suitable to the priesthood of Isis.

It was on Dec. 24, 1871, that this beautiful work was first heard. The celebrated double bass player, Bottesini, was the conductor and the cast was this: *Aida*, Signora Pozzoni; *Amneris*, Signora Grossi; *Rhadames*, Signor Mongini; *Amonasro*, Signor Steller; *Ramphis*, Signor Medini; the *King*, Signor Costa; a *Messenger*, Signor Bottardi. The first performance in New York took place on Nov. 26, 1873, at the Academy of Music. The cast was as follows: *Aida*, Ottavia Torriani; *Amneris*, Annie Louise Cary; *Rhadames*, Italo Campanini; *Amonasro*, Victor Maurel; *Ramphis*, Nannetti, and *King*, Scolara. Previous to this the opera had been produced in Milan, Paris and London. It went through the musical world with great rapidity and it has preserved its early vitality in a marked degree.

Verdi was charged with submitting himself in this opera to the influence of Wagner, but the work is built on purely Italian lines. The composer did not adopt Wagner's system of representative themes, his continuous melody, nor his type of harmony. The score of "Aïda" consists of a series of complete musical numbers, just as "Il Trovatore" or "La Traviata" does, but these numbers are artistically joined in such a way that each act produces an effect of perfect continuity. There are arias preceded by recitatives, just as there were in the days of Handel, and some of these arias have the "da capo," or return to the first part, which was inseparable from the vocal numbers of the eighteenth century. But Verdi's recitative is so varied, so little touched by the old styles, and so closely allied to the melodic character of the airs, that it must be classed with that fluent and declamatory recitation which constitutes the major part of a Wagner drama. Verdi's recitative, however, is just as characteristically Italian as Wagner's is German.

Without question it was in this triumphant demonstration of the splendid dramatic possibilities of the old Italian forms in opera that Verdi showed himself to be the leader of lyric art in his country and a teacher for all the rest of the world. The ready manner in which Leoncavallo and Mascagni adopted the entire apparatus of Verdi, contributing to opera only the novelty of condensation into one act, shows what a powerful influence he had on his compatriots. Puccini in most of his operas has faithfully followed the methods of Verdi, while in certain others, "Tosca" and "The Girl of the Golden West," he has endeavored to combine with the Verdian apparatus the representative themes of Wagner.

In composing "Aïda" Verdi threw overboard the worn-out materials of his earlier style. One hears no more the simple elementary dance rhythms upon which so many of his former airs rested. Compare the style of "Ah, fors e lui," with "O patria mia," or that of "Il Balen" with the appeal of *Amonasro* in the third act. In abandoning these old dance rhythms the master also discontinued the employment of the primitive scheme of harmony so familiar in the older Italian operas. He sought to impart to his music a great depth of expression by the use of the rich variety of chord successions which had come into modern music.

It was in this department of his art that Verdi made one of his greatest strides and by it excited astonishment not only in Italy, but throughout the artistic world. Those who had never before regarded him as anything better than an unusually clever Italian opera writer now began to suspect that they were confronted by a profound master of music. Opera-goers who are well acquainted with the older works of Verdi must have noted the splendor of the harmonies in "Aïda" as compared with those of its predecessors. Doubtless many hearers attribute this harmonic richness to the opulence of the orchestration, but musicians will readily understand that the latter owes more to the former than vice versa.

The instrumentation of "Aïda" is indeed an immense advance over that of the same composer's previous creations. The employment of delineative devices is liberal and the introduction of what are known as color effects is frequent. Naturally Verdi endeavored to create something which would strike his hearers as an imitation of Egyptian color and this had to be done in two or three ways. First and foremost it was

open to the composer to sprinkle his score with ancient themes. But he preferred to make his own and to give them the necessary character.

This he could do by imitating oriental melodic sequences, and rhythms. As for the eastern rhythms we may dismiss these as of little importance in an operatic score such as that under consideration. The melodic sequences, however, are worthy of a passing note because Verdi has utilized them and with excellent effect. Not all of them are strictly Egyptian, but they are of kinds not found in western European music. Such, for example, are the song of the hidden priestesses in the temple scene, the melody of the ceremonial dance, the prefatory instrumental passage before "O patria mia" and others of similar character. These are mentioned because they are perhaps the most easily identified by the hearer. The principal numbers of the first scene of this admirable opera are the tenor air, "Celeste Aïda," sung soon after the rising of the curtain, the stirring ensemble following the delivery of the message concerning the war, and *Aïda's* beautiful air, "Ritorno vincitor." In the second scene the chorus and dance of priestesses and the ensuing prayer, concluding with the clarion call "Immenso Phtha," are the chief features.

The dance of the slaves in the first scene of the second act is usually enjoyed, while the duet between *Aïda* and *Amneris* is a strong example of the new dramatic style of writing introduced by Verdi in this work and imitated by many of the younger Italians. The broad mass effects of the finale of the second act are always the cause of much enthusiasm among opera-goers, but perhaps the skill of the musical development escapes many of them. The trumpets used by the marchers on the stage are not reproductions of the ancient Egyptian instruments, for these were much shorter and could probably emit only three tones of the common chord. But Verdi's are not of the familiar kind and they serve to create an illusion.

The third act which takes place by the banks of the Nile is musically very rich. The solo of *Aïda* sometimes called "O cieli azzuri" and sometimes "O patria mia" is one of the most beautiful specimens of the true Italian aria to be found in all modern opera. The duet between *Aïda* and *Amonasro* is the next of the string of pearls in this scene, and this is followed by a still more captivating duet for *Aïda* and *Rhadames*. Then comes a vigorous trio, after which the act is brought to its end with the declamatory phrase with which *Rhadames* surrenders his sword to the Priest.

The last act has a good duet for *Rhadames* and *Amneris* and a characteristic solo for *Amneris*, while she listens to the trial going on in the subterranean chamber. The last important number is the duet, "O terra addio," for *Aïda* and *Rhadames*. This is one of the most effective parts of the opera and its style is just close enough to that of Verdi's earlier works to enable us to discern wherein the novelty of "Aïda" consists.

No description of such a masterpiece, however, can give the music lover any conception of its real greatness. The hearer who listens to it for the first time will not fail to perceive the tremendous vigor of its musical basis, nor the splendor of the spectacular qualities of its graphic and intensely theatric style. But only repeated hearings will open up to the opera-goer the unerring skill with which the master disposed his lights and shades, the dramatic instinct with which he developed his

musical inventions, the psychologic insight shown in the character of the melodies themselves and the craftsmanship revealed in the arrangement of their relations to one another.

From the first dialogue between *Rhadames* and the Priest to the last sigh of “O terra addio” there is no moment when the music fails to embody the emotions of the drama, nor is there any when it does not succeed in enchaining the attention by its own intrinsic beauty. A true Italian, Verdi always allots the leading thoughts to the voices and his writing for the singers is entirely favorable to the display of their best powers. But he welds the voice parts and the orchestral portion into one consistent whole, which is without doubt one of the most symmetrical art works in the wide field of the lyric drama.

W. J. Henderson.

Aïda

CHARACTERS

Aida, an Ethiopian Slave.

Amneris, Daughter of the King of Egypt.

Rhadames, Captain of the Egyptian Guards.

Amonasro, King of Ethiopia (Aïda's Father).

Ramphis, High Priest of Isis.

King of Egypt.

A Messenger.

Priests, Priestesses, Ministers, Captains, Soldiers, Functionaries, Slaves, and Ethiopian Prisoners, Egyptian People, &c., &c.

The action takes place at Memphis and at Thebes during the reign of the Pharaohs.

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ATTO PRIMO

Scena I

Sala nel palazzo del Re a Menfi.—A destra e a sinistra una colonnata con statue e arbusti in fiori.—Grande porta nel fondo, da cui appaiono i templi, i palazzi di Menfi e le Piramidi.

Radamès *ER* Ramfis

RAMFIS

Sì, corre voce che l'Etiope ardisca
Sfidarci ancora, e del Nilo la valle
E Tebe minacciar—Fra breve un messo
Recherà il ver.

RADAMÈS

La sacra
Iside consultasti?

RAMFIS

Ella ha nomato
Delle egizie falangi
Il condottier supremo.

RADAMÈS

Oh lui felice!

RAMFIS

(Con intenzione, fissando Radamès.)
Giovine e prode è desso—Ora, del Nume
Reco i decreti al Re. *(Esce.)*

RADAMÈS

Se quel guerriero
Io fossi! se il mio sogno
Si avverasse! Un esercito di prodi
Da me guidato—e la vittoria—e il plauso

Di Menfi tutta!—E a te, mia dolce Aïda,
Tornar di lauri cinto—
Dirti: per te ho pugnato e per te ho vinto!
Celeste Aïda, forma divina,
Mistico serto di luce e fior;
Del mio pensiero tu sei regina,
Tu di mia vita sei lo splendor.
Il tuo bel cielo vorrei ridarti,
Le dolci brezze del patrio suol;
Un regal serto sul crin posarti,
Ergerti un trono vicino al sol.

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Scena II

Amneris *E Detto*

AMNERIS

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

RADAMÈS

D'un sogno avventuroso
Si beava il mio cuore—Oggi, la diva
Profferse il nome del guerrier che al campo
Le schiere egizie condurrà—S'io fossi
A tale onor prescelto!

AMNERIS

Nè un altro sogno mai
Più gentil—più soave—
Al cuore ti parlò? Non hai tu in Menfi
Desiderii—speranze?

RADAMÈS

(Io! quale inchiesta!
Forse—l'arcano amore
Scopri che m'arde in core—
Della sua schiava il nome
Mi lesse nel pensier!)

AMNERIS

(Oh! guai se un altro amore
Ardesse a lui nel core!
Guai se il mio sguardo pènetra
Questo fatal mister!)

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Scena III

Aïda *E Detti*

RADAMÈS

(Vedendo Aida.)

Dessa!

AMNERIS

(Ei si turba—e quale
Sguardo rivolse a lei!
Aida! a me rivale—
Forse saria costei?)
(Dopo breve silenzio volgendosi ad Aida.)
Vieni, diletta, appressati—
Schiava non sei, nè ancella
Quì dove in dolce fascino
Io ti chiamai sorella—
Piangi? delle tue lagrime
Svela il segreto.

AÏDA

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

AMNERIS

Favelli il ver? nè s'agita
Più grave cura in te?
*[Aida abbassa gli occhi e cerca di dissimulare il suo
turbamento.—Guardando Aida.]*
(Trema, o rea schiava, ah! trema
Ch'io nel tuo cor discenda!
Trema che il ver mi apprenda
Quel pianto e quel rossor!)

AÏDA

(No, sull'afflitta patria

Non geme il cor soltanto;
Quello ch'io verso è pianto
Di sventurato amor.)

RADAMÈS

(Guardando Amneris.)
(Nel volto a lei balena
Lo sdegno ed il sospetto—
Guai se l'arcano affetto
A noi leggesse in cor!)

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Scena IV

Il Re, preceduto dalle sue guardie e seguito da Ramfis, da Ministri, Sacerdoti, Capitani, ecc., ecc.—Un Ufficiale di Palazzo, indi un Messaggero.

IL RE

Alta cagion vi aduna,
O fidi Egizii, al vostro Re d'intorno.
Dal confin d'Etiòpia un messaggero
Dianzi giungea—gravi novelle ei reca.
Vi piaccia udirlo.
(*Ad un Ufficiale.*)
Il messaggier si avanzi!

MESSAGGIERO

Il sacro suolo dell'Egitto è invaso
Dai barbari Etiòpi—i nostri campi
Fur devastati—arse le messe e baldi
Della facil vittoria, i predatori
Già marciano su Tebe.

TUTTI

Ed osan tanto!

MESSAGGIERO

Un guerriero indomabile, feroce,
Li conduce—Amonasro.

TUTTI

Il Re!

AIDA

(Mio padre!)

MESSAGGIERO

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

IL RE

Si! guerra e morte il nostro grido sia.

TUTTI

Guerra! guerra!

IL RE

Tremenda, inesorata!
(*Accostandosi a Radamès.*)
Iside venerata
Di nostre schiere invitte
Già designava il condottier supremo.
Radamès.

TUTTI

Radamès!

RADAMÈS

Sien grazie ai Numi!
I miei voti fur paghi.

AMNERIS

(Ei duce!)

AIDA

(Io tremo!)

IL RE

Or di Vulcano al tempio
Muovi, o guerrier—Le sacre
Armi ti cingi e alla vittoria vola.
Sù! del Nilo al sacro lido
Accorrete, egizii eroi;
Da ogni cor prorompa il grido:
Guerra e morte allo stranier!

RAM. *E* SAC

Gloria ai Numi! Ognun rammenti

Ch'essi reggono gli eventi—
Che in poter dei Numi solo
Stan le sorti del guerrier.

CORO

Sù! del Nilo al sacro lido
Sien barriera i nostri petti;
Non echeggi che un sol grido:
Guerra, e morte allo stranier!

RADAMÈS

Sacro fremito di gloria
Tutta l'anima mi investe—
Sù, corriamo alla vittoria!
Guerra e morte allo stranier!

AMNERIS

(Recando una bandiera e consegnandola a Radamès.)
Di mia man ricevi, o duce,
Il vessillo glorioso;
Ti sia guida, ti sia luce
Della gloria sul sentier.

AÏDA

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

TUTTI

Guerra! guerra! sterminio all'invasor!
Va, Radamès, ritorna vincitor!
[Escono tutti, meno Aïda.]

AÏDA

Ritorna vincitor! E dal mio labbro
Uscì l'empia parola!—Vincitore
Del padre mio—di lui che impugna l'armi
Per me—per ridonarmi
Una patria, una reggia! e il nome illustre
Che qui celar mi è forza—Vincitore

De' miei fratelli—ond'io lo vegga, tinto
Del sangue amato, trionfar nel plauso
Dell'egizie coorti! E dietro il carro,
Un re—mio padre—di catene avvinto!
L'insana parola,
O Numi sperdete!
Al seno d'un padre
La figlia rendete;
Struggete le squadre
Dei nostri oppressor!
Sventurata! che dissi? e l'amor mio?
Dunque scordar poss'io
Questo fervido amor che oppressa e schiava
Come raggio di sol quì mi beava?
Imprecherò la morte—
A Radamès—a lui che amo pur tanto!
Ah! non fu in terra mai
Da più crudeli angoscie un core affranto.
I sacri nomi di padre—di amante,
Nè profferir poss'io, nè ricordar—
Per l'un—per l'altro—confusa—tremante—
Io piangere vorrei—vorrei pregar.
Ma la mia prece in bestemmia si muta—
Delitto è il pianto a me—colpa il sospir—
In notte cupa la mente è perduta—
E nell'ansia crudel vorrei morir.
Numi, pietà—del mio soffrir!
Speme non v'ha pel mio dolor,
Amor fatal, tremendo amor.
Spezzami il cor—fammi morir!

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Scena V

Interno del tempio di Vulcano a Menfi.—Una luce misteriosa scende dall'alto.—Una lunga fila di colonne, l'una all'altra addossate, si perde fra le tenebre.—Statue di varie divinità.—Nel mezzo della scena, sopra un palco coperto da tappeti sorge l'altare sormontato da emblemi sacri.—Dai tripodi d'oro si innalza il fumo degli incensi.

Sacerdoti e Sacerdotesse.—Ramfis ai piedi dell'altare.—A suo tempo, Radamès.—Si sente dall'interno il canto delle Sacerdotesse accompagnato dalle arpe.

SACERDOTESSE

(Nell'interno.)

Possente, possente Fthà! del mondo,
Spirito animator, ah!
Noi ti invociamo!
Immenso Fthà, del mondo
Spirito fecondator,
Noi ti invociamo!
Fuoco increato, eterno,
Onde ebbe luce il sol,
Noi ti invociamo!

SACERDOTI

Tu che dal nulla hai tratto
L'onde, la terra e il ciel,
Noi ti invociamo!
Nume che del tuo spirito
Sei figlio e genitor,
Noi ti invociamo!
Vita dell'universo,
Mito di eterno amor,
Noi ti invociamo!

[Radamès viene introdotto senz'armi.—Mentre va all'altare, le Sacerdotesse (ballerine) eseguono la danza sacra.—Sul capo di Radamès vien steso un velo d'argento.]

RAMFIS

Mortal, diletto ai Numi—a te fidate
Son d'Egitto le sorti—Il sacro brando
Dal Dio temprato, per tua man diventi
Ai nemici terror, folgore, morte.

(Volgendosi al Nume.)
Nume, custode e vindice
Di questa sacra terra,
La mano tua distendi
Sovra l'egizio suol.

RADAMÈS

Nume, che duce ed arbitro
Sei d'ogni umana guerra,
Proteggi tu, difendi
D'Egitto il sacro suol!
*[Mentre Radamès viene rivestito delle armi sacre, le Sacerdotesse ed i
Sacerdoti riprendono l'inno religioso e la mistica danza.]*

fine dell' atto primo

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ATTO SECONDO

Scena I

Una sala nell'appartamento di Amneris.

Amneris circondata dalle schiave che l'abbigliano per la festa trionfale.—Dai tripodi si eleva il profumo degli aromi.—Giovani schiavi mori danzando agitano i ventagli di piume.

SCHIAVE

Chi mai fra gli inni e i plausi
Erge alla gloria il vol,
Al par di un Dio terribile
Fulgente al par del sol.
Vieni! sul crin ti piovano
Contesti ai lauri i fiori,
Suonin di gloria i cantici
Coi cantici d'amor.

AMNERIS

(Vieni, amor mio, mi inebria—
Fammi beato il cor!)

SCHIAVE

Or, dove son le barbare
Orde dello stranier?
Siccome nebbia sparvero
Al soffio del guerrier.
Vieni: di gloria il premio
Raccogli, o vincitor:
T'arrise la vittoria,
T'arriderà l'amor.

AMNERIS

(Vieni, amor mio, ravvivami
D'un caro accento ancor!)
Silenzio! Aïda verso noi si avvanza—
Figlia dei vinti, il suo dolor mi è sacro.
[Ad un cenno di Amneris tutti si allontanano.]
Nel rivederla, il dubbio

Atroce in me si desta—
Il mistero fatal si squarci alfine!

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Scena II

Amneris *E* Aïda

AMNERIS

(Ad Aïda con simulata amorevolezza.)

Fu la sorte dell'armi a' tuoi funesta,
Povera Aïda!—Il lutto
Che ti pesa sul cor teco divido.
Io son l'amica tua—
Tutto da me tu avrai—vivrai felice!

AÏDA

Felice esser poss'io
Lungi dal suol natio—quì dove ignota
M'è la sorte del padre e dei fratelli?

AMNERIS

Ben ti compiangio; pure hanno un confine
I mali di quaggiù—Sanerà il tempo
Le angosce del tuo core—
E più che il tempo, un Dio possente—Amore.

AÏDA

(Vivamente commossa.)

(Amore! Amore!—gaudio—tormento
Soave ebbrezza—ansia crudel—
Nei tuoi dolori—la vita io sento—
Un tuo sorriso—mi schiude il ciel!)

AMNERIS

(Guardando Aida fissamente.)

(Ah! quel pallore—quel turbamento
Svelan l'arcana—febbre d'amor—
D'interrogarla—quasi ho sgomento—
Divido l'ansie—del suo terror.)

(Ad Aida fissandola attentamente.)

Ebben: qual nuovo fremito
Ti assal, gentil Aïda?
I tuoi segreti svelami,

All'amor mio ti affida—
Tra i forti che pugnarono
Della tua patria a danno—
Qualcuno—un dolce affanno—
Forse—a te in cor destò?

AÏDA

Che parli?

AMNERIS

A tuti barbara
Non si mostrò la sorte—
Se in campo il duce impavido
Cadde trafitto a morte—

AÏDA

Che mai dicesti! ahi misera!

AMNERIS

Si—Radamès da' tuoi
Fu spento—E pianger puoi?

AÏDA

Per sempre io piangerò!

AMNERIS

Gli dei t'han vendicata.

AÏDA

Avversi sempre
Mi furo i Numi—

AMNERIS

(Prorompendo con ira.)
Ah! trema! in cor ti lessi—
Tu l'ami—

AÏDA

Io!

AMNERIS

Non mentire!
Un detto ancora e il vero
Saprò—Fissami in volto—
Io t'ingannai—Radamès vive.

AÏDA

(Con esaltazione, inginocchiandosi.)
Ei vive!
Sien grazie ai Numi!

AMNERIS

E mentir speri ancora?
Sì—tu l'ami—ma l'amo
(Nel massimo furore.)
Anch'io—comprendi tu?—son tua rivale,
Figlia dei Faraoni.

AÏDA

(Con orgoglio, alzandosi.)
Mia rivale!
Ebben sia pure—Anch'io—
Son tal—
(Reprimendosi.)
Che dissi mai? pietà! perdono!
Ah! pietà ti prenda del mio dolor—
E vero—io l'amo d'immenso amor—
Tu sei felice—tu sei possente—
Io vivo solo per questo amor!

AMNERIS

Trema vil schiava! spezzare il tuo core,
Segnar tua morte può quest'amore.
Del tuo destino arbitra sono,
D'odio e vendetta le furie ho in cor.
[Suoni interni.]
Alla pompa che si appresta,
Meco, o schiava, assisterai;

Tu prostrata nella polve
Io sul trono, accanto al Re.
Vien—mi segui—e apprenderai
Se lottar tu puoi con me.

AÏDA

Ah! pietà!—che più mi restami?
Un deserto è la mia vita:
Vivi e regna, il tuo furore
Io fra breve placherò.
Questo amore che ti irrita
Nella tomba spegnerò.

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Scena III

Uno degli ingressi della città di Tebe.—Sul davanti un gruppo di palme.—A destra il tempio di Ammone; a sinistra un trono sormontato da un baldacchino di porpora; nel fondo una porta trionfale.—La scena è ingombra di popolo.

Entra il Re seguito dai Ministri, Sacerdoti, Capitani, Flabelliferi, Porta-insegne, ecc., ecc. Quindi, Amneris con Aïda e Schiave.—Il Re va a sedere sul trono.—Amneris prende posto alla sinistra del Re.

CORO

Gloria all'Egitto, ad Iside
Che il sacro suol protegge!
Al Re che il Delta regge,
Inni festosi alziam!
Vieni, o guerriero vindice,
Vieni a gioir con noi;
Sul passo degli eroi
I lauri e i fior versiam!

DONNE

S'intrecci il loto al lauro
Sul crin dei vincitori;
Nembo gentil di fiori
Stenda sull'armi un vel.
Danziam, fanciulle egizie,
Le mistiche carole.
Come d'intorno al sole
Danzano gli astri in ciel!

SACERDOTI

Della vittoria agli arbitri
Supremi il guardo ergete,
Grazie agli Dei rendete
Nel fortunato dì.
Così per noi di gloria
Sia l'avvenir segnato.
Nè mai ci colga il fato
Che i barbari colpì.

[Le truppe Egizie precedute dalle fanfare sfilano dinanzi al Re.—Seguono i carri di guerra, le insegne, i vasi sacri, le statue degli Dei.—Un drappello di

danzatrici che recano i tesori dei vinti.—Da ultimo, Radamès, sotto un baldacchino portato da dodici ufficiali.]

IL RE

(Scende dal trono per abbracciare Radamès.)

Salvator della patria, io ti saluto,

Vieni, e mia figlia di sua man ti porga

Il serto trionfale.

[Radamès si inchina davanti a Amneris che gli porge la corona.] . . .

IL RE

(A Radamès.)

Ora, a me chiedi

Quanto più brami. Nulla a te negato

Sarà in tal dì—lo giuro

Per la corona mia, pei sacri Numi.

RADAMÈS

Concedi in pria che innanzi a te sian tratti

I prigionier.

[Entrano fra le guardie i prigionieri Etiopi, ultimo Amonasro vestito da semplice ufficiale.]

AÏDA

Che veggo! Egli? mio padre!

TUTTI

Suo padre!

AMNERIS

In poter nostro!

AÏDA

(Abbracciando il padre.)

Tu! Prigionier!

AMONASRO

(Piano ad Aida.)

Non mi tradir!

IL RE

(Ad Amonasro.)
Ti appressa—
Dunque—tu sei?

AMONASRO

Suo padre—Anch'io pugnai—
Vinti noi fummo e morte invan cercai,
(Accennando alla divisa che lo veste.)
Questa assisa ch'io vesto vi dica
Che il mio Re, la mia patria ho difeso:
Fu la sorte a nostr'armi nemica—
Tornò vano dei forti l'ardir.
Al mio piè nella polve disteso
Giacque il Re da più colpi trafitto;
Se l'amor della patria è delitto,
Siam rei tutti, siam pronti a morir!
(Volgendosi al Re con accento supplichevole.)
Ma tu, o Re, tu signore possente,
A costoro ti volgi clemente—
Oggi noi siam percossi dal fato,
Doman voi potria il fato colpir.

Aïda, Prigionieri *E* Schiave

Si: dai Numi percossi noi siamo;
Tua pietà, tua clemenza imploriamo;
Ah! giammai di soffrir vi sia dato
Ciò che in oggi n'è dato soffrir!

RAMFIS *E* SACERDOTI

Struggi, o Re, queste ciurme feroci.
Chiudi il core alle perfide voci,
Fur dai Numi votati alla morte,
Si compisca dei Numi il voler!

POPOLO

Sacerdoti, gli sdegni placate,
L'umil prece dei vinti ascoltate;
E tu, o re, tu, possente, tu forte
A clemenza dischiudi il pensier.

RADAMÈS

(Fissando Aida.)
(Il dolor che in quel volto favella
Al mio sguardo la rende più bella;
Ogni stilla del pianto adorato
Nel mio petto ravviva l'amor.)

AMNERIS

(Quali sguardi sovr'essa ha rivolti!
Di qual fiamma balenano i volti!
E a tal sorte serbata son io?
La vendetta mi rugge nel cor.)

IL RE

Or che fausti ne arridon gli eventi
A costoro mostriamci clementi:
La pietà sale ai Numi gradita
E rafferma dei Prenci il poter.

RADAMÈS

(Al Re.)
O Re: pei sacri Numi,
Per lo splendore della tua corona,
Compier giurasti il voto mio.

IL RE

Giurai.

RADAMÈS

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

AMNERIS

(Per tutti!)

SACERDOTI

Morte ai nemici della patria!

POPOLO

Grazia per gli infelici!

RAMFIS

Ascolta, o Re—
(*A Radamès.*)
Tu pure,
Giovine eroe, saggio consiglio ascolta:
Son nemici e prodi sono—
La vendetta hanno nel cor,
Fatti audaci dal perdono
Correranno all'armi ancor!

RADAMÈS

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

RAMFIS

Almeno,
Arra di pace e securtà, fra noi
Resti col padre Aïda—
Gli altri sien sciolti.

IL RE

Al tuo consiglio io cedo.
Di securtà, di pace un miglior pegno
Or io vuo' darvi—Radamès, la patria
Tutto a te deve—D'Amneris la mano
Premio ti sia. Sovra l'Egitto un giorno
Con essa regnerai.

AMNERIS

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

IL RE

Gloria all'Egitto e ad Iside
Che il sacro suol difende,
S'intrecci il loto al lauro
Sul crin del vincitor!

SACERDOTI

Inni leviamo ad Iside
Che il sacro suol difende;
Preghiam che i fati arridano
Fausti alla patria ognor.

AÏDA

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

PRIGIONIERI

Gloria al clemente Egizio
Che i nostri ceppi ha sciolto,
Che ci ridona ai liberi
Solchi del patrio suol.

RADAMÈS

(D'avverso Nume il folgore
Sul capo mio discende—
Ah no! d'Egitto il soglio
Non val d'Aïda il cor.)

AMNERIS

(Dall'inatteso giubilo
Inebriata io sono;
Tutti in un dì si compiono
I sogni del mio cor.)

AMONASRO

(*Ad Aïda.*)
Fa cor: della tua patria
I lieti eventi aspetta:
Per noi della vendetta
Già prossimo è l'albòr.

POPOLO

Gloria all'Egitto e ad Iside
Che il sacro suol difende!

S'intrecci il loto al lauro
Sul crin del vincitor!

fine dell'atto secondo

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ATTO TERZO

Scena I

Le rive del Nilo.—Rocce di granito fra cui crescono dei palmizii.—Sul vertice delle rocce il tempio d'Iside per metà nascosto tra le fronde.—E notte stellata.—Splendore di luna.

CORO

(Nel tempio.)

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

[Da una barca che approda alla riva, discendono Amneris e Radamès, alcune donne coperte da fitto velo e guardie.]

RAMFIS

(Ad Amneris.)

Vieni d'Iside al tempio—alla vigilia
Delle tue nozze, implora
Della Diva il favore—Iside legge
Dei mortali nel cuore—ogni mistero
Degli umani è a lei noto.

AMNERIS

Sì! pregherò che Radamès mi doni
Tutto il suo cor, come il mio core a lui
Sacro è per sempre.

RAMFIS

Pregherai fino all'alba—io sarò teco.
[Tutti entrano nel tempio.—Il coro ripete il canto sacro.]

AIDA

(Entra cautamente coperta da un velo.)
Quì Radamès verrà—Che vorrà dirmi?
Io tremo—Ah, se tu vieni

A recarmi, o crudel, l'ultimo addio,
Del Nilo i cupi vortici
Mi daran tomba—e pace forse—e oblio.
O cieli azzurri, o dolci aure native
Dove sereno il mio mattin brillò—
O verdi colli—o profumate rive—
O patria mia, mai più ti rivedrò!

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Scena II

Amonasro *E* Aïda

AÏDA

Cielo! mio padre!

AMONASRO

A te grave cagione
Mi adduce, Aïda. Nulla sfugge al mio
Sguardo—L'amor ti struggi
Per Radamès—ei t'ama—e quì lo attendi.
Dei Faraon la figlia è tua rivale—
Razza infame, aborrita e a noi fatale!

AÏDA

E in suo potere io sto!—Io d'Amonasro
Figlia!

AMONASRO

In poter di lei! No!—se lo brami
La possente rival tu vincerai,
E patria, e trono, e amor, tutto tu avrai.
Rivedrai le foreste imbalsamate,
Le fresche valli, i nostri templi d'or!

AÏDA

Rivedrò le foreste imbalsamate,
Le fresche valli, i nostri templi d'or!

AMONASRO

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

AÏDA

Un giorno solo di sì dolce incanto—
Un'ora di tal gaudio—e poi morir!

AMONASRO

Pur rammenti che a noi l'Egizio immite,
Le case, i tempj e l'are profanò—
Trasse in ceppi le vergini rapite—
Madri—vecchi e fanciulli ei trucidò.

AÏDA

Ah! ben rammento quegli infausti giorni!
Rammento i lutti che il mio cor soffrì—
Deh! fate, o Numi, che per noi ritorni
L'alba invocata dei sereni dì.

AMONASRO

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

AÏDA

Chi scoprirlo potria? chi mai?

AMONASRO

Tu stessa!

AÏDA

Io!

AMONASRO

Radamès so che quì attendi—Ei t'ama—
Ei conduce gli Egizii—Intendi?

AÏDA

Orrore!
Che mi consigli tu? No! no! giammai!

AMONASRO

(Con impeto selvaggio.)
Su, dunque, sorgete

Egizie coorti!
Col fuoco struggete
Le nostre città—
Spargete il terrore,
Le stragi, le morti—
Al vostro furore
Più freno non v'ha.

AIDA

Ah padre!

AMONASRO

(Respingendola.)
Mia figlia ti chiami!

AIDA

(Atterrita e supplichevole.)
Pietà!

AMONASRO

Flutti di sangue scorrono
Sulle città dei vinti—
Vedí? dai negri vortici
Si levano gli estinti—
Ti additan essi e gridano,
Per te la patria muor!

AIDA

Pietà

AMONASRO

Una larva orribile
Fra l'ombre a noi s'affaccia—
Trema! Le scarne braccia
Sul capo tuo levò—
Tua madre ell'è—ravvisala—
Ti maledice.

AIDA

(Nel massimo terrore.)

Ah no!—padre!—

AMONASRO

(Respingendola.)

Va, indegna, non sei mia prole,
Dei Faraoni tu sei la schiava.

AÏDA

Padre, a costoro schiava io non sono—
Non maledirmi—non imprecarmi—
Tua figlia ancora potria chiamarmi—
Della mia patria degna sarò.

AMONASRO

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

AÏDA

O patria, o patria!—quanto mi costi!

AMONASRO

Coraggio! ei giunge—là tutto udrò.
[*Si nasconde fra i palmizii.*]

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Scena III

Radamès *Ed* Aïda

RADAMÈS

Pur ti riveggo, mia dolce Aïda.

AÏDA

Ti arresta, vanne—che sperì ancor?

RADAMÈS

A te dappresso l'amor mi guida.

AÏDA

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

RADAMÈS

Che parli mai?
Te sola, Aïda, te deggio amar.
Gli Dei mi ascoltano—tu mia sarai.

AÏDA

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

RADAMÈS

Dell'amor mio dubiti, Aïda?

AÏDA

E come
Sperì sottrarti d'Amneris ai vezzi,
Del Re al voler, del tuo popolo ai voti,
Dei sacerdoti all'ira?

RADAMÈS

Odimi, Aïda.
Nel fiero anelito di nuova guerra
Il suolo Etiope si ridestò—
I tuoi già invadono la nostra terra,
Io degli Egizii duce sarò.
Fra il suon, fra i plausi della vittoria,
Al Re mi prostro, gli svelo il cor—
Sarai tu il serto della mia gloria,
Vivrem beati d'eterno amor.

AÏDA

Nè d'Amneris paventi
Il vindice furor? La sua vendetta,
Come folgore tremenda
Cadrà su me, sul padre mio, su tutti.

RADAMÈS

Io vi difendo.

AÏDA

Invan, tu nol potresti—
Pur—se tu m'ami—ancor s'apre una via
Di scampo a noi.

RADAMÈS

Quale?

AÏDA

Fuggir.

RADAMÈS

Fuggire!

AÏDA

Fuggiam gli ardori inospiti
Di queste lande ignude;
Una novella patria
Al nostro amor si schiude.

Là! tra foreste vergini,
Di fiori profumate.
In estasi beate
La terra scorderem.

RADAMÈS

Sovra una terra estrania
Teco fuggir dovrei!
Abbandonar la patria,
L'are de' nostri Dei!
Il suol dov'io raccolsi
Di gloria i primi allori,
Il ciel dei nostri amori
Come scordar potrem?

AÏDA

Sotto il mio ciel più libero
L'amor ne fia concesso;
Ivi nel tempio istesso
Gli stessi Numi avrem.

RADAMÈS

(Esitante.)
Aïda!

AÏDA

Tu non m'ami—Va!

RADAMÈS

Non t'amo!
Mortal giammai, nè Dio
Arse d'amore al par del mio possente.

AÏDA

Va—va—ti attende all'ara Amneris.

RADAMÈS

No! giammai!

AIDA

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

RADAMÈS

Ah no! fuggiamo!
(*Con appassionata risoluzione.*)
Sì: fuggiam da queste mura,
Al deserto insiem fuggiamo:
Quì sol regna la sventura,
Là si schiude un ciel d'amor.
I deserti interminati
A noi talamo saranno,
Su noi gli astri brilleranno,
Di più limpido fulgor.

AIDA

Nella terra avventurata
De' miei padri il ciel ne attende;
Ivi l'aura è imbalsamata,
Ivi il suolo è aromi e fior.
Fresche valli e verdi prati
A noi talamo saranno,
Su noi gli astri brilleranno
Di più limpido fulgor.

Aida*ER*Radamès

Vieni meco—insiem fuggiamo
Questa terra di dolor—
Vieni meco—io t'amo, io t'amo!
A noi duce fia l'amor.
[*Si allontanano rapidamente.*]

AIDA

(*Arrestandosi all'improvviso.*)
Ma, dimmi: per qual via
Eviterem le schiere
Degli armati?

RADAMÈS

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

AIDA

E quel sentier?

RADAMÈS

Le gole di Napata.

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Scena IV

Amonasro, Aïda e Radamès

AMONASRO

(Comparendo.)
Di Napata le gole!
Ivi saranno i miei.

RADAMÈS

Oh! chi ci ascolta?

AMONASRO

D'Aïda il padre e degli Etiopi il Re.

RADAMÈS

(Agitatissimo.)
Tu! Amonasro—tu il Re? Numi! che dissi?
No! non è ver! sogno—delirio è questo.

AÏDA

Ah no! ti calma—ascoltami,
All'amor mio ti affida.

AMONASRO

A te l'amor d'Aïda
Un soglio innalzerà.

RADAMÈS

Per te tradii la patria!
Io son disonorato.

AMONASRO

No! tu non sei colpevole.—
Era voler del fato—
Vieni, oltre il Nil ne attendon

I prodi a noi devoti,
Là del tuo core i voti
Coronerà l'amor.

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Scena V

(Amneris dal tempio, indi Ramfis, Sacerdoti, Guardie e detti.)

AMNERIS

Traditor!

AÏDA

La mia rivale!

AMONASRO

(Avventandosi su Amneris con un pugnale.)
Vieni a strugger l'opra mia Muori!—

RADAMÈS

(Frapponendosi.) . . .
Arresta, insano!

AMONASRO

Oh rabbia!

RAMFIS

Guardie, olà!

RADAMÈS

(Ad Aïda e Amonasro.)
Presto! fuggite!

AMONASRO

(Trascinando Aïda.)
Vieni, o figlia!

RAMFIS

(Alle guardie.)
Li inseguite!

RADAMÈS

(A Ramfis.)

Sacerdote, io resto a te.

fine dell' atto terzo

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ATTO QUARTO

Scena I

Sala nel palazzo del Re.—Alla sinistra, una gran porta che mette alla sala sotterranea delle sentenze.—Andito a destra che conduce alla prigione di Radamès.—Amneris mestamente atteggiata davanti la porta del sotterraneo.

AMNERIS

L'abborrita rivale a me sfuggia—
Dai sacerdoti Radamès attende
Dei traditor la pena.—Traditore
Egli non è. Pur rivelò di guerra
L'alto segreto—egli fuggir volea—
Con lei fuggire. Traditori tutti!
A morte! A morte! O! che mai parlo? io l'amo,
Io l'amo sempre. Disperato, insano
E questo amore che la mia vita strugge.
Oh, s'ei potesse amarmi!
Vorrei salvarlo! E come?
Si tenti! Guardie: Radamès quì venga.

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Scena II

RADAMÈS

(Condotto dalle guardie.)

AMNERIS

Già i sacerdoti adunansi
Arbitri del tuo fato!
Pur dell'accusa orribile
Scolparti ancor ti è dato;
Ti scolpa, e la tua grazia
Io pregherò dal trono,
E nunzia di perdono,
Di vita, a te sarò.

RADAMÈS

Di mie discolpe i giudici
Mai non udran l'accento;
Dinanzi ai Numi e agli uomini
Nè vil, nè reo mi sento.
Profferse il labbro incauto
Fatal segreto, è vero,
Ma puro il mio pensiero
E l'onor mio restò.

AMNERIS

Salvati dunque e scolpati.

RADAMÈS

No!

AMNERIS

Tu morrai!

RADAMÈS

La vita
Abborro; d'ogni gaudio
La fonte inaridita,

Svanita ogni speranza,
Sol bramo di morir.

AMNERIS

Morire! ah! tu dei vivere!
Sì, all' amor mio vivrai;
Per te le angosce orribili
Di morte io già provai;
T'amai—soffersi tanto—
Vegliai le notti in pianto—
E patria, e trono, e vita
Tutto darei per te.

RADAMÈS

Per essa anch'io la patria
E l'onor mio tradiva.

AMNERIS

Di lei non più!

RADAMÈS

L'infamia
Mi attende e vuoi che io viva?
Misero appien mi festi,
Aïda a me togliesti,
Spenta l'hai forse—e in dono
Offri la vita a me?

AMNERIS

Io—di sua morte origine!
No! vive Aïda.

RADAMÈS

Vive!

AMNERIS

Nei disperati aneliti
Dell'orde fuggitive
Sol cadde il padre.

RADAMÈS

Ed ella?

AMNERIS

Sparve, nè più novella
S'ebbe.

RADAMÈS

Gli Dei l'adducano
Salva alle patrie mura
E ignori la sventura
Di chi per lei morrà!

AMNERIS

Or, s'io ti salvo, giurami
Che più non la vedrai.

RADAMÈS

No! posso!

AMNERIS

A lei rinunzia
Per sempre—e tuo vivrai!

RADAMÈS

No! posso!

AMNERIS

Anco una volta:
A lei rinunzia.

RADAMÈS

E vano!

AMNERIS

Morir vuoi dunque, insano?

RADAMÈS

Pronto a morir son già.

AMNERIS

Chi ti salva, o sciagurato,
Dalla sorte che ti aspetta?
In furore hai tu cangiato
Un amor che ugual non ha.
De' miei pianti la vendetta
Ora il cielo compirà.

RADAMÈS

E la morte un ben supremo
Se per lei morir m'è dato;
Nel subir l'estremo fato
Gaudii immensi il core avrà;
L'ira umana io più non temo,
Temo sol la tua pietà.
[*Radamès parte circondato dalle guardie.*]

AMNERIS

(*Cade desolata sopra un sedile.*)
Ohimè! morir mi sento. Oh! chi lo salva?
E in poter di costoro
Io stessa lo gettai! Ora, a te impreco
Atroce gelosia, che la sua morte
E il lutto eterno del mio cor segnasti!
[*Si volge e vede i Sacerdoti che attra versano la scena per entrare nel sotterraneo.*]
Che veggo! Ecco i fatali,
Gli inesorati ministri di morte—
Oh! ch'io non vegga quelle bianche larve!
[*Si copre il volto con le mani.*]

SACERDOTI

(*Nel sotterraneo.*)
Spirto del Nume sovra noi discendi!
Ne avviva al raggio dell'eterna luce;
Pel labbro nostro tua giustizia apprendi.

AMNERIS

Numi, pietà del mio straziato core—
Egli è innocente, lo salvate, o Numi!
Disperato, tremendo è il mio dolore!
*[Radamès fra le guardie attraversa la scena e scende nel
sotterraneo.—Amneris, a vederlo, emette un grido.]*

RAMFIS

(Nel sotterraneo.)
Radamès—Radamès: tu rivelasti
Della patria i segreti allo straniero.

SACERDOTI

Discòlpate!

RAMFIS

Egli tace—

TUTTI

Traditor!

RAMFIS

Radamès, Radamès: tu disertasti,
Dal campo it di che precedea la pugna.

SACERDOTI

Discòlpate!

RAMFIS

Egli tace.

TUTTI

Traditor!

RAMFIS

Radamès, Radamès: tu fè violasti,
Alla patria spergiuro, al Re, all'onor!

SACERDOTI

Discòlpati!

RAMFIS

Egli tace.

TUTTI

Traditor!
Radamès, è deciso il tuo fato:
Degli infami la morte tu avrai;
Sotto l'ara del Nume sdegnato
A te vivo fia schiuso l'avel.

AMNERIS

A lui vivo—la tomba—Oh! gli infami!
Nè di sangue son paghi giammai—
E si chiaman ministri del ciel!
[*Investendo i Sacerdoti che escono dal sotterraneo.*]
Sacerdoti: compiste un delitto—
Tigri infami di sangue assetate—
Voi la terra ed i Numi oltraggiate—
Voi punite chi colpa non ha.

SACERDOTI

E traditor! morrà.

AMNERIS

(*A Ramfis.*)
Sacerdote: quest'uomo che uccidi,
Tu lo sai—da me un giorno fu amato.
L'anatèma d'un core straziato
Col suo sangue su te ricadrà.

SACERDOTI

E traditor! morrà.
[*Si allontanano lentamente.*]

AMNERIS

Empia razza! anatèma! su voi

La vendetta del ciel scenderà.
[*Esce disperata.*]

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Scena III

La scena è divisa in due piani.—Il piano superiore rappresenta l'interno del tempio di Vulcano splendente di oro e di luce; il piano inferiore un sotterraneo.—Lunghe file d'arcate si perdono nell'oscurità.—Statue colossali d'Osiride colle mani incrociate sostengono i pilastri della volta.

Radamès è nel sotterraneo sui gradini della scala per cui è disceso.—Al di sopra, due Sacerdoti intenti a chiudere la pietra del sotterraneo.

RADAMÈS

La fatal pietra sopra me si chiuse—
Ecco la tomba mia. Del dì la luce
Più non vedrò—Non rivedrò più Aïda—
Aïda, ove sei tu? Possa tu almeno
Viver felice e la mia sorte orrenda
Sempre ignorar! Qual gemito!—Una larva!
Una vision— No! forma umana è questa—
Cielo!— Aïda!

AÏDA

Son io—

RADAMÈS

Tu—in questa tomba!

AÏDA

Presagò il core della tua condanna,
In questa tomba che per te si apriva
Io penetrai furtiva—
E qui lontano da ogni umano sguardo
Nelle tue braccia desiai morire.

RADAMÈS

Morir! sì pura e bella!
Morir per me d'amore—
Degli anni tuoi nel fiore,
Fuggir la vita!
T'avea il cielo per l'amor creata,
Ed io t'uccido per avverti amata!

No, non morrai!
Troppo t'amai!
Troppo sei bella!

AÏDA

(Vaneggiando.)
Vedi? di morte l'angelo
Radiante a noi si appressa—
Ne adduce eterni gaudii
Sovra i suoi vanni d'or.
Su noi già il ciel dischiudesi—
Ivi ogni affanno cessa—
Ivi comincia l'estasi
D'un immortal amor.
[Canti e danze delle sacerdotesse nel tempio.]

AÏDA

Triste canto!

RADAMES

Il tripudio
Dei Sacerdoti.

AÏDA

Il nostro inno di morte.

RADAMES

(Cercando di smuovere la pietra del sotterraneo.)
Nè le mie forti braccia
Smuovere ti potranno, o fatal pietra!

AÏDA

Invan! tutto è finito
Sulla terra per noi.

RADAMES

(Con desolata rassegnazione.)
E vero! è vero!
(Si avvicina ad Aïda e la sorregge.)

AÏDA *E* RADAMES

O terra, addio; addio, valle di pianti—
Sogno di gaudio che in dolor svanì
A noi si schiude il cielo e l'alme erranti
Volano al raggio dell'eterno di.

*[Aïda cade dolcemente fra le braccia di Radamès.—Amneris in abito di lutto
apparisce nel tempio e va a prostrarsi sulla pietra che chiude il sotterraneo.]*

AMNERIS

Pace t'imploro—salma adorata—
Isi placata—ti schiuda il ciel!

fine dell'opera

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ACT ONE

Scene I

A hall in the King's palace at Memphis. To the right and left a colonnade with statues and flowers in blossom.—At the back a high gateway through which may be seen the temples and palaces of Memphis and the Pyramids.

Rhadames And Ramphis

RAMPHIS

Yes, the story goes that the Ethiopian once more ventures to threaten our power in the valley of the Nile as well as at Thebes. I shall soon learn the truth from a messenger.

RHADAMES

Hast thou consulted the mysteries of Isis?

RAMPHIS

She has declared who shall be commander of all the Egyptian hosts.

RHADAMES

Oh, happy man!

RAMPHIS

(With a meaning look at Radames.)

Young is he in years, and fearless. I go to bear the goddess' bidding to the King.

(Exit.)

RHADAMES

What if I am chosen! Be now my dream accomplished! I, the chosen leader of a mighty army! Mine, the victory! Mine the acclaim of all Memphis! To thee, returning, my sweet Aīda, crowned with laurel! To tell thee, that for thee I fought, for thee I conquered!

Radiant Aīda, beauty all glorious,
Mystical garland of brightness and bloom,
Queen o'er my bosom reigning victorious,

All of my soul with thy light to illumine!
Would that the skies of thy country now blessed thee,
That thou could'st breathe its soft fragrance divine.
Would that its diadem royal caressed thee,
And that a throne next the sun could be thine!

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Scene II

Amneris And The Same

AMNERIS

In thy face I see a joy unwonted! What noble fury glistens in thine eye! Ah me! How worthy of envy would be the woman whose loved presence could awaken such a glow of rapture in thy soul!

RHADAMES

A dream of wild ambition in my heart's heart I cherished. To-day has the goddess told his name who shall lead the Egyptian host to battle,—what if I were chosen for this distinguished honour!

AMNERIS

Has not another dream, and one more gentle, more alluring, spoken to thy heart? Hast thou not in Memphis something more earnestly desired and hoped for?

RHADAMES

(Aside.)
I? fatal inquisition!
Has she the hidden yearning
Divined, within me burning,
And learned that toward her slave-girl
My every thought is turned?

AMNERIS

(Aside.)
If toward another yearning
His heart for her is burning
Through my unguarded glances
The fatal truth he's learned.

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Scene III

Aïda And The Same

RHADAMES

(Catching sight of Aida.)

Aida!

AMNERIS

(Aside.)

He is troubled—ne'er a lover
His devotion showed so clear!
Aida! should I discover
To my heart a rival here?
(After a short pause turning to Aida.)
Come, my darling, now draw nearer.
Nor slave nor menial be thy name
Who deserv'st a fashion dearer.
I in thee a sister claim.
Thou weapest? Of thy sorrow's flow
Let me the secret know.

AÏDA

Alas! a war is raging,
The dreadful cry—I hear it
For this unhappy country,
For me—for all I fear it.

AMNERIS

Thou speak'st the truth? Nor art aware
Thy bosom feels a deeper care?
[Aida casts down her eyes and tries to hide her confusion.]
(Aside, looking steadily at Aïda.)
Tremble, O thou slave, yes, tremble
Lest thy secret be detected,
For the truth I have suspected,
How she wept and how she blushed!

AIDA

(Aside.)

No! This sore-afflicted country
Not alone my heart is wringing;
Hopeless love the tear is bringing,
That upon destruction rushed!

RHADAMES

(Aside, looking at Amneris.)

Now her face is full of anger
And with scorn her glances lower,
What if she exert her power,
And my heart's desire be crushed!

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Scene IV

The King enters, preceded by his Guards and followed by Ramphis, Ministers of State, Priests, Captains, etc., etc.—An officer of the Palace, and later, a Messenger.

THE KING

Mighty the cause that summons you, O faithful sons of Egypt, round your King. From the land of Ethiopia a messenger has this moment reached us, bringing news of gravest import. Be pleased to hear him.

(To an officer.)

Let the messenger come forward!

MESSENGER

The sacred soil of Egypt is invaded by the barbarous Ethiop. Our fields are ravaged and the crops are burned. Emboldened by this easy victory, the plunderers are e'en now marching upon Thebes.

ALL

Outrageous insult!

MESSENGER

A warrior indomitable, fierce, conducts them—Amonasro.

ALL

The King!

AÏDA

(Aside.)

My father!

MESSENGER

All Thebes is up in arms and, from her hundred gates, will pour on the invader her answer of war and carnage.

THE KING

Yes, war and carnage be our cry henceforward.

ALL

War! War!

THE KING

Terrible, unrelenting!

(Addressing Rhadames.)

Isis, most holy, has already appointed the supreme leader of all our dauntless hosts—Rhadames.

ALL

Rhadames!

RHADAMES

I thank you, O ye Gods! My dearest wish is won.

AMNERIS

(Aside.)

The leader!

AÏDA

(Aside.)

I tremble!

THE KING

Now to Vulcan's temple let us go, O warrior, there to gird thee with thy sacred armour and then to victory speed.

Rise! the invading host defy,
Guard your sacred Nile, Egyptians;
Burst from each heart the battle cry,
Death and destruction to the stranger!

RAMPHIS AND THE PRIESTS

Praise to the Gods, not one forgetting,
All of life they give its setting,
From their hands all changes letting;
Save us from this mortal danger.

CHORUS

Rise and on your strength rely,
Guard your sacred Nile, Egyptians,
And shout this one stern battle cry—
Death and destruction to the stranger!

RHADAMES

Glory's sacred ravings claim me,
Thoughts of war alone inflame me;
Ne'er disaster come to shame me—
Death and destruction to the stranger!

AMNERIS

(Presenting a banner to Rhadames.)
From my hand, O leader brave,
Take this banner ever glorious,
May it still for victory wave,
Be thy foeman's source of danger!

AÏDA

(Aside.)
For whom weeping? For whom praying?
In my love for him delaying,
Though my country I'm betraying
For an enemy—a stranger.

ALL

War! War! and root the invaders out,
For Rhadames, returned victorious, shout!
[Exeunt, except Aïda.]

AÏDA

Returned victorious! Can my lips pronounce the impious word! Victorious o'er my father, o'er him who leads an army for me—that I may be restored to a country, a

kingdom, and an illustrious name that now I'm forced to hide! Victorious o'er my brothers! E'en now I see him stained with their dear blood, amid the roaring triumph of the Egyptian host! And behind his chariot a King—my father—bound with chains!

That word, soul-destroying,
O deem it unspoken;
Ye Gods, and my father,
His daughter heart-broken,
Restore, with a crushing
Defeat for our foemen!
O madness! What say I? And to my heart's yearning,
Is there no turning?
What of the love that consoled me, oppressed,
Like a ray of the sun that has cheered me and blessed?
Shall I implore destruction
On Rhadames, for whose love I languish?
Ah! Never heart upon this earth
Was crushed by so great anguish.
The sacred names of father and of lover
I dare not utter, dare not e'en recall,
Confused and trembling for the one, the other
My prayers shall rise and still my tears shall fall,
Alas my prayer in doubt and sin seems shrouded.
To suffer is a wrong for me, a sin to cry.
In gloomy shadows wrapt, my mind is clouded,
And of this two-fold anguish I must die.
Take pity on me, O ye Gods most high!
No shelter have I for my sorrow here—
O fatal love, yet love I hold so dear,
Break, break, my trembling heart and let me die!

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Scene V

Interior of the temple of Vulcan at Memphis. A mysterious light shining from above. A long row of columns, one behind the other, vanishing in the distance.—Statues of various Divinities. In the middle of the stage, above a platform carpeted with rich stuffs, rises the altar surmounted by the sacred emblems.—Golden tripods on which incense is burning.

Priests and Priestesses.—Ramphis at the foot of the altar.—Later Rhadames.—From within is heard the singing of the Priestesses accompanied by a harp.

PRIESTESSES

(Within.)

Omnipotent Phtha! of creation,
Spirit life-giving, pure!
Thee, in our prayer, we invoke!
Phtha, who pervadest the whole of creation,
Spirit of fruitfulness,
Thee, in our prayer, we invoke!
Flame uncreated, eternal,
Sovereign dispenser of light,
Thee, in our prayer, we invoke!

PRIESTS

Thou, who all things hast created,
The water, the earth, and the sky,
Thee, in our prayer, we invoke!
Thou, who of thine own nature,
Art son as well as father,
Thee, in our prayer, we invoke!
Life of all things created,
Giver of love everlasting,
Thee, in our prayer, we invoke!
[Rhadames enters without his armor.—As he advances to the altar the priestesses (corps de ballet) perform their sacred dance.—There is placed on Rhadames' head a silver veil.]

RAMPHIS

Mortal, beloved of the gods, to thee is confided the destiny of Egypt. The sacred sword, divinely tempered, is placed in thy hands, to bring upon the enemy terror and ruin and death.

(Turning to the god.)

O God, protector, avenger
Of all we hold most dear,
Thy mighty hand extending,
Save the Egyptian soil.

RHADAMES

O God, thou judge of battles,
The path of war make clear,
Protecting and defending,
Egypt's most sacred soil!

[During the investiture of Rhadames with the sacred armor, the Priests and Priestesses resume the devotional hymn and the mystic dance.]

end of the first act

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ACT II

Scene I

A hall in the apartments of Amneris.—Amneris surrounded by slave-girls, who are adorning her for the triumphal feast.—From the tripods perfumed incense is rising.—Moorish slave-boys dance and wave feather-fans.

SLAVES

Ever his name and his praises
We'll raise to the glory on high,
That like a divinity blazes,
Outshining the sun in the sky,
Come, bind in thy glorious tresses,
The laurels of victory sweet,
Whom triumph and power caresses,
And Love lays his song at thy feet.

AMNERIS

(Aside.)
(Come, my love, my one desire,
Fill my heart with rapture sweet.)

SLAVES

Oh! the stranger's host is shattered,
That had ventured Egypt's might,
As doves are by the eagle scattered,
Were they driven in the fight.
Now, a crown of triumph presses
On his brow—for that is meet—
Him whom victory caresses
Shall caress devotion sweet.

AMNERIS

(Aside.)

(Come, my loved one, and revive me
With thy accents dear once more!)

Silence! Aida is coming toward me—a daughter of the conquered race, to me her grief is sacred.

[At a sign from Amneris all the slaves retire.]

Seeing her again, the dreadful doubt awakens in my heart! At last I'll wrest her fatal secret from her!

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Scene II

Amneris And Aïda

AMNERIS

(To Aïda, with pretended affection.)

The chances of battle have proved disastrous to thee, my poor Aïda! Be sure that I divide with thee the sorrow that weighs down thy heart. I am thy friend—ask what thou wilt of me, I would make thee happy!

AÏDA

How can I be happy, far from my native land and ignorant of the fate of my father and brothers!

AMNERIS

I feel with thee deeply; and yet there is a limit to all sorrow here below. Time will cure the anguish of thy heart. And there is a powerful God, greater than time—Love.

AÏDA

(Aside, deeply moved.)

O Love! Love! a joy tormenting,
Exquisite madness, cruel delight,
By thy affliction, a life-time contenting,
And in thy smile a radiance bright.

AMNERIS

(Aside, looking intently at Aïda.)

Ah! She is troubled, her countenance paling,
This is the secret, the fever of love.
How shall I question—my courage is failing—
Still has her anguish the power to move.

(Gazing at her more intently.)

Nay, but tell me, do not tremble,
What my sweet Aïda fears.
Nor thy secret thoughts dissemble,
Confidence a friend endears;
Of the many warriors bold
'Gainst thy country's peace enrolled,
One perhaps his love has told,

Nor received an answer cold?

AÏDA

What meanest thou?

AMNERIS

The cruel fate of war
Not all alike embraces,
Sometimes the dauntless warrior,
The leader, it effaces.

AÏDA

Wretch, to say so!

AMNERIS

Yes, Rhadames by thy tribe is slaughtered—And thou mourn'st him?

AÏDA

Forever I shall mourn!

AMNERIS

The gods have avenged thee.

AÏDA

Forever hostile to me have been the gods—

AMNERIS

(Bursting forth with rage.)

Ah! Tremble! In thy heart of hearts thou lovest him—

AÏDA

Yes!

AMNERIS

Away with seeming! A little word and I shall know the truth. Look on my face—I told thee falsely—Rhadames lives.

AÏDA

(Kneeling in ecstasy.)

He lives! The gods be praised!

AMNERIS

Dost thou hope still to deceive me! Yes, thou lovest him—but I love him (*with the utmost fury*)—even I—dost thou hear me? Thy rival is a daughter of the Pharaohs!

AÏDA

(Drawing herself up with pride.)

My rival! If 'twere true—even I—

(Checking herself and falling at Amneris' feet.)

What have I said? O pity me and pardon!
O pity for my sore distresses give,
'Tis true! For this o'ermastering love I live,
But thou art happy—thou all things possesest.
And only in this love of mine I live.

AMNERIS

Tremble, vile slave! For thy heart thou'rt betraying,
With thine own life for thy love thou art paying,
On my sole power thy fate is dependent.
Reins to my envious rage thou dost give.
[Sounds heard within.]
In the pageant they prepare,
Thou, O slave, shalt have thy share,
Prostrate in the dust thou'lt lie,
See me, with the King on high.
Come—behind me—thou did'st dare
Overmuch my power to try.

AÏDA

Ah, thy pity! Full of care,
Life to me is but a snare.
Live and reign, thy furious rage
Death will presently assuage,
And my love the grave shall bear,
That war with thee did'st wage.

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Scene III

Entrance gate to the city of Thebes.—In front a cluster of palms.—To the right a temple of Ammon; to the left a throne with a purple canopy above; at the back a triumphal arch.—The stage is crowded with people.

Enter the King, followed by Ministers, Priests, Captains, Fan-bearers, Standard-bearers, etc., etc.—After them, Amneris with Aida and Slaves.—The King takes his seat upon the throne.—Amneris places herself on the King's left.

CHORUS

Glory to Egypt and to Isis,
Who our sacred land enfoldeth!
And to him the throne who holdeth
Now our festive song we sing!
Hither come, O warriors glorious,
Mingle, now, your joy with ours,
Wreaths of laurel and of flowers
For their royal progress bring!

WOMEN

Laurel leaves with lotus woven
Shall the conquering brows entwine,
While a cloud of flowers combine
Warlike arms to hide from sight;
Circle round, Egyptian dancers,
And your mystic carol sing,
As the stars, a heavenly ring,
Circle round their sovereign bright.

PRIESTS

Now we lift our humble glances
To the gods above, most glorious,
Who have made our arms victorious,
Sing their praise this festive day.
For through them our foes were scattered,
And our honor cleared from blame.
Never let us feel the shame
Of the hated stranger's sway!
[The Egyptian troops announced by the blaring of trumpets, march before the King. They are followed by war-chariots, banners, the sacred vessels and

statues of the gods. A band of dancing girls bearing the captured spoils. At the end, Rhadames enters under a canopy borne by twelve officers.]

KING

(Descends from the throne to embrace Rhadames.)

Saviour of thy country, I salute thee. Come, and my daughter, with her own hand, shall give thee the crown of triumph.

[Rhadames bows before Amneris, who gives him the crown.]

KING

(To Rhadames.)

Ask what thou wilt and freely will I grant it. Naught shall be denied thee on such a day as this. I swear it by my crown and by the holy gods.

RHADAMES

First deign to order that the captives be brought before thee.

[Enter the Ethiopian captives surrounded by a guard. Amonasro last, in the dress of simple officer.]

AÏDA

(Aside.)

Whom see I! Is he here? My father?

ALL

Her father!

AMNERIS

And in our power!

AÏDA

(Embracing her father.)

Thou! A prisoner!

AMONASRO

(Aside to Aïda.)

Betray me not!

KING

(To Amonasro.)

Approach thou—so then—thou art—?

AMONASRO

Her father—in my country's cause, I fought.
Nor, conquered, could I find the death I sought.
(Pointing to his uniform.)
This you have learned from the dress I am wearing,
I have my King and my country defended.
Vain, 'gainst our fate were all courage and daring,
We were unable its might to defy.
Then I perceived 'mid the carnage extended,
The form of the King—it was covered with gore.
Now if to fight for the land we adore,
Be worthy of death, we are ready to die!
(Turning to the King, as a suppliant.)
But thou, O King, in thy power transcendent,
Spare thou the lives on thy mercy dependent,
We, by the fates are to-day overtaken,
What in the fates of to-morrow may lie?

AÏDA, CAPTAINS AND SLAVES

Yes, though the anger of Heaven seems chiding,
Show us thy pity, thy mercy abiding,
Ah! May ye never, by fortune forsaken,
In the despair of captivity sigh!

RAMPHIS AND PRIESTS

Death is, O King, their just destination,
Close, then, thy heart to all vain supplication.
Since they are doomed by high Heaven to perish,
Heaven's decree we ought not to delay.

PEOPLE

Calm, holy priests, your anger exceeding,
Graciously list to the desolate, pleading,
And thou, O King, whose dominion we cherish,
The mandates of mercy haste to obey.

RHADAMES

(Aside, looking at Aïda.)
Wan is her cheek with weeping and sorrow,
Yet from affliction beauty doth borrow.
Now in my bosom love's flame is new lighted,
By every drop that flows from her eyes.

AMNERIS

(Aside.)
Ah! With the passionate zeal of a lover,
Round her his glances linger and hover,
She hath been chosen: in my bosom slighted,
Furious promptings of envy arise.

KING

Now since our banners in triumph are waving,
Mercy to show, the unfortunate saving,
This to the Heavens above us is pleasant,
Adding new strength to a powerful sway.

RHADAMES

(To the King.)

O King, by the holy gods and by the splendor of thy crown, thou didst swear to give me whatever I might ask.

KING

I swore it.

RHADAMES

Even so: I pray that thou grant life and liberty to these Ethiopian captives.

AMNERIS

(Aside.)

All of them!

PRIESTS

Death to Egypt's enemies!

PEOPLE

Mercy for the wretched!

RAMPHIS

Hear me, O King;

(To Rhadames.)

And thou, too, youthful hero, the voice of prudence hear:

Thy foes to battle hardened,
Are yet thy foes at heart,
Will bolder grow, if pardoned,
And soon from peace depart.

RHADAMES

With Amonasro, their warrior king slain, all hope of vengeance is lost.

RAMPHIS

At least, we should detain Aïda's father, as a hostage to peace and safety. Set all the others free.

KING

I yield to thy advice. Yet now a surer bond of peace and safety will I give you. Rhadames, thy country owes thee all. The hand of Amneris, my daughter, shall be thy reward. Sovereign of Egypt shalt thou reign with her hereafter.

AMNERIS

(Aside.)

Now, now, let the slave-girl rob me of my love—she dare not!

KING

Egypt praise, and Isis fair,
Our sacred land is in her care;
Laurel now with lotus twine
For the mighty victor's brow.

PRIESTS

Raise your hymns to Isis fair,
Our sacred land is in her care.
May she, with her favor blest,
Our country still endow.

AIDA

(Aside.)
Alas! to me what hope remains?
He glory and a throne attains,
But only loneliness and tears
Shall be my portion now.

CAPTIVES

Praise to Egypt's gracious land,
Who pity on a captive band
Hath ta'en, and granted liberty
Once more our soil to tread.

RHADAMES

(Aside.)
Now Heaven's bolt upon my head
Hath fallen! All my hopes are dead.
Nought to me were Egypt's treasure
Could I Aida's love avow.

AMNERIS

(Aside.)
Almost bereft of every sense
By joy unspeakable, immense,
'Tis triumph's wondrous recompense!
Now my love I can avow.

AMONASRO

(To Aïda.)

Take heart: we may amend the fate
Of our country desolate.
Presently this haughty state
Shall before our vengeance bow.

PEOPLE

Egypt praise, and Isis fair,
Our sacred land is in her care.
Laurel now with lotus twine
For the mighty victor's brow!

end of second act

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ACT III

Scene I

The banks of the Nile—Granite hills covered with palm trees.—On the summit a temple of Isis, half hidden by the foliage.—Night full of stars and the splendor of the moon.

CHORUS

(Within the temple.)

O thou, who art of Osiris
Mother immortal and wife,
Goddess, who all chaste desires
Hath placed in the heart by thy might,
Bend o'er us in pity exceeding,
Mother of love and of light.

[From a boat which approaches the bank, descend Amneris and Ramphis, followed by women closely veiled, and guards.]

RAMPHIS

(To Amneris.)

Come to the temple of Isis, on the eve before thy marriage, and pray for the goddess's favor. To Isis are all hearts open. To her thy inmost thoughts are known.

AMNERIS

Yes, and I will pray that Rhadames may give me all his heart, as my heart to him has e'er been wholly given.

RAMPHIS

Pray thou until dawn. I shall be near thee.

[All enter the temple.—The chorus repeat their hymn.]

AÏDA

(Enters cautiously, with her head veiled.)

Rhadames will come—what will he tell me?
My heart is troubled! If thou com'st to me,
O cruel one, a last farewell to speak,
The rushing waters of the Nile shall hide me;

Oblivion there—and dreamless peace—I'll seek.
O pleasant skies, O breezes softly blowing,
Where the calm morning of life seemed so bright,
O grassy hills, O sweet rivers flowing,
Blest native country, lost is thy light!

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Scene II

Amonasro And Aïda

AÏDA

Heavens! My father!

AMONASRO

The weightiest reasons have brought me to thy side, Aïda. Naught escapes my eye. For love of Rhadames thou art dying. He loves thee, thou awaitest him. A daughter of the Pharaohs is thy rival.

AÏDA

O race accursed, abhorred and fatal to us! And I am in her power! I, Amonasro's daughter!

AMONASRO

In her power! No! If thou wishest, thou shalt conquer thy powerful rival; and country and throne and love, all shall be thine. Thou shalt see again our balmy forests, our verdant vales, our temples built of gold!

AÏDA

I shall see again our balmy forests, our verdant vales, our temples built of gold!

AMONASRO

The happy bride of him for whom thou'rt panting,
Exultant joy, thou'lt feel, with rapture sigh.

AÏDA

A single day of sweetness so enchanting,
An hour of such delight—then let me die!

AMONASRO

Ah, but recall how Egypt's host descended,
Daring our homes, our altars to profane,
Loading with chains the maidens undefended,

Leaving the aged and the helpless slain.

AÏDA

Yes, I remember that heart-crushing sorrow,
Remember the strife in my bosom it woke.
Ah! That they grant us a brighter to-morrow,
All of the gods, in their mercy, invoke!

AMONASRO

Lose not a moment! Our people, undaunted,
Ready in arms are preparing the blow.
Vict'ry is sure, and but one thing is wanted,
What is the path they have chosen—the foe?

AÏDA

Who will discover that path? Dost thou know?

AMONASRO

Thou wilt.

AÏDA

I!

AMONASRO

Rhadames, whom thou await'st, will tell thee.
He leads the Egyptian forces—and he loves thee!

AÏDA

Horror!
Thou promptest me to this? No! No! I cannot!

AMONASRO

(With savage violence.)
Up, then, and plunder,
Egypt's band!
Rending asunder
Our native land.
Scatter wild terror,
Confusion and error,

Give reins to your fury,
Let nothing stand!

AÏDA

O Father!

AMONASRO

(Repulsing her.)
Thou call'st thyself my daughter!

AÏDA

(Terrified and supplicating.)
Have mercy!

AMONASRO

Torrents of blood shall crimson flow
O'er the city of the vanquished,
Seest thou? From death's dark gulf below,
They raise their bosoms anguished,
And with accusing finger show
Thee as their cause of woe!

AÏDA

Have mercy!

AMONASRO

A phantom terrible
From that gulf dread,
Withered hands stretched
Over thy head.
Thy mother's hands—O see!
She curses thee.

AÏDA

(With the utmost terror.)
Ah, no!—father!

AMONASRO

(Repulsing her.)

Go, misbegotten, thou art not my daughter. Thou art the Pharaohs' slave.

AÏDA

Father, no more I'll be their slave,
Ah, thy curses dread appal me!
Still thy daughter thou may'st call me,
For I will my country save.

AMONASRO

Think of thy race, conquered, effaced,
Restored by thy grace, to freedom and place.

AÏDA

O my country, my country, at how great cost!

AMONASRO

Courage! He comes! I'll hide me here.
[*Conceals himself among the palms.*]

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Scene III

Rhadames And Aïda

RHADAMES

Once more, my sweet Aïda, I behold thee.

AÏDA

Arrest thee! Hence! What hope is thine?

RHADAMES

That thou wert here, love told me.

AÏDA

I to another must thy hand resign,
Betrothed of Amneris.

RHADAMES

What hast thou said?
Thee only, sweet Aïda, can I love,
Be Heaven my witness, for thee I shall wed.

AÏDA

Invoke not falsely, the great gods above.
The brave, not the forsworn I love.

RHADAMES

Thou doubt'st my love, Aïda?

AÏDA

But how
Thinkest thou to efface
The love of thy Princess, the will of the King,
The wrath of the priests and the hopes of thy race?

RHADAMES

Hear me, Aïda,
Again, the torch of war, with zeal untiring,
To a new blaze the Ethiop has fanned,
Our country to invade once more aspiring,
And all of Egypt's armies I command.
When me their shouts and songs proclaim victorious,
The grateful King a new reward will give
And thou shalt be my crown of triumph glorious,
With thee in endless peace and love to live.

AÏDA

Nay, but Amneris you should fear,
Her rage, her envious fury
Like Heaven's thunder-bolt would fall
On me, my father, on us all.

RHADAMES

I will defend thee.

AÏDA

In vain thou would'st attempt it.
Yet—if thou lov'st me—there is still a way,
To safety for us.

RHADAMES

What way?

AÏDA

To fly.

RHADAMES

Together!

AÏDA

Ah, fly these treacherous heats that burn,
The land beneath them blighting,
To a new country let us turn,
Our faithful love inviting.

There where virgin forests rise,
And amid sweet-scented flowers,
In this ecstasy of ours,
The earth we'll ne'er regret.

RHADAMES

To another land, a stranger,
With thee thou bid'st me fly,
My country leave in danger,
Its sacred claims deny?
Land these arms have ever shielded,
Land whose conquering sword I've wielded,
Land, the sight of thee that yielded,
All this can I forget?

AÏDA

In my pleasant land abiding,
There our hearts to love confiding.
Never will thy gods be chiding,
For them we'll honor yet.

RHADAMES

(Hesitating.)
Aïda!

AÏDA

Thou lov'st me not! Go!

RHADAMES

Not love thee! Ne'er god nor mortal burned with such devouring passion.

AÏDA

Go, go, thy Amneris awaits thee at the altar.

RHADAMES

No! In vain!

AÏDA

In vain, thou sayest? Then fall the axe on me and on my father!

RHADAMES

Ah, no! Let us fly!
(*With passionate resolution.*)
Yes, we'll fly these walls now hated,
In the desert hide our treasure:
Here the land to woe seems fated,
There the skies are bright with love,
Boundless deserts naught can measure,
Soon our bridal couch shall spread,
And the stars their radiance shed,
Our canopy above.

AÏDA

In that land all grief allaying,
There shall balmy skies await thee,
And the gentle breezes straying,
Flowers to shed their fragrance move.
Verdant vales and pleasant meadows,
There our bridal couch we'll spread,
And the stars their radiance shed,
Our canopy above.

AÏDA AND RHADAMES

Come with me, and together let us flee,
From the land where spectres rove,
Come with me—I love thee, love thee,
And our guide shall be but love.
[*They are hastening away when suddenly Aïda stops.*]

AÏDA

Nay, tell me by what path we may avoid their rising army?

RHADAMES

By the path that we have chosen to fall upon the Ethiopians. It will be deserted until morning.

AÏDA

And what path is that?

RHADAMES

The passes of Napata!

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Scene IV

Amonasro, Aïda And Rhadames

AMONASRO

(Springs forward.)

The passes of Napata! There I'll post my troops.

RHADAMES

Oh! Who has overheard us?

AMONASRO

Aïda's father, Ethiopia's King.

RHADAMES

(In great surprise.)

Thou! Amonasro! Thou, the King! Heavens! What sayest thou? No! 'Tis false! I dream, I rave in madness!

AÏDA

Ah, no! Be calm and hear me,
True love thy steps are guiding.

AMONASRO

In Aïda's love confiding,
A throne thy prize shall be.

RHADAMES

For thee I have betrayed my country, lost my honor!

AMONASRO

No! Of guilt thou'rt wholly blameless,
For it was the will of Heaven.
Come, beyond the Nile await thee

Loyal troops thy name to cherish,
Joys that tarnish not, nor perish,
Crowning thee with love.

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Scene V

(Enter Amneris from the temple, then Ramphis, priests, guards, as above.)

AMNERIS

Traitor!

AÏDA

My rival!

AMONASRO

(Rushing toward Amneris with a dagger.)

Thou comest to mar my plans! Die, then!

RHADAMES

(Interposing.)

Nay, strike not, madman!

AMONASRO

O fury!

RAMPHIS

Guards, advance there!

RHADAMES

(To Aïda and Amonasro.)

This instant! Fly!

AMONASRO

(Dragging Aida away.)

Come thou, my daughter!

RHADAMES

(To the guards.)

Quickly! Follow them!

RHADAMES

(To Ramphis.)

Holy priest, to thee I yield.

end of the third act

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ACT IV

Scene I

A hall in the King's palace.—On the left, a great gate leading to a subterranean hall of justice.—A passage on the right leading to Rhadames' prison.—Amneris, crouching sorrowfully before the great gate.

AMNERIS

My hated rival has escaped me, and from the priests Rhadames is awaiting a traitor's doom. Yet traitor he is none. Though he disclosed a weighty secret of war—he meant to fly—to fly with her. Traitors are they all! To death! To death! Oh, what have I said? I love him, I love him still. Yes, desperate, mad is this love that is eating out my heart. Oh, if he could only love me! Fain would I save him! But how? I'll try it! Guards, Rhadames bring hither.

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Scene II

RHADAMES

(Led in by guards.)

AMNERIS

Already do the priests assemble,
Upon their sentence only hangs thy fate.
Though for the dreadful charge I tremble,
Thou can'st, perhaps, that charge abate.
Once I am free, to gain thy pardon
At my father's feet I'll humbly kneel,
To his mercy sure appeal,
And life I'll gain for thee.

RHADAMES

Ne'er shall a syllable be spoken
By my lips my name to clear,
Yet Heaven's law I have not broken,
Nor its judgment do I fear.
The fatal secret I imparted,
All heedlessly, but ever pure
Have been my thoughts; I could endure
No stain upon my soul to be.

AMNERIS

Then save thy life, thy honour free.

RHADAMES

No!

AMNERIS

Thou would'st die?

RHADAMES

Life I abhor; the spring of all its joy is dry,
All hope is dead. 'Twere better far to die.

AMNERIS

To die! Ah, me! consent to live.
Yes, of all my love assured;
The keenest anguish death can give
For thee I have endured.
I love thee, and for thee I'm dying,
All the night in torture lying,
My country, throne, and life itself,
I'd give them all for thee.

RHADAMES

For her, I have staked my country and my honour!

AMNERIS

No more of her!

RHADAMES

Dishonour
Awaits me, and yet thou bidst me live?
Wretched hast thou made life ever,
From Aïda tried to sever,
It may be thou hast slain her—and in fee—
Thou offerest life to me?

AMNERIS

I, the cause of her death! No, Aïda lives.

RHADAMES

She lives!

AMNERIS

They were beaten and fled in wild confusion. Her father perished.

RHADAMES

And she?

AMNERIS

Has disappeared, nor do we

Aught further know.

RHADAMES

Oh, may the gods protect her
And guide her safe returning,
Shield her heart from ever learning,
For her my life I spurn!

AMNERIS

But, if I save thee, wilt thou swear
Her image to resign?

RHADAMES

I cannot!

AMNERIS

Renounce her forever—
And life shall be thine!

RHADAMES

I cannot.

AMNERIS

But one word more;
Wilt thou renounce her?

RHADAMES

Never!

AMNERIS

Life's thread thou wouldst sever?

RHADAMES

Ready for death am I.

AMNERIS

Who will save thee, wretched being,

From thy overmastering fate?
Now from all compunction freeing,
Thou hast changed my love to hate.
May Heaven all my anguish seeing,
This cruel blow abate!

RHADAMES

A good supreme it is to perish,
Since my life for her is given.
When the bands of life are riven,
With delight my heart will glow.
Human wrath no more I cherish,
Only pity do I know.
[Rhadames is led out surrounded by the guards.]

AMNERIS

(Falling disconsolate upon a seat.)

Ah, me! I feel death approaching. Oh, who will save him? Now he is in their power and I have sealed his fate! Oh, how I curse thee, outrageous jealousy, that hast doomed him to death and me to endless sorrow!

[She turns and sees the priests, who cross the stage to enter the subterranean chamber.]

What do I see? There come the fatal, inexorable ministers of death—let me not look upon those white-robed spectres!

[She covers her face with her hands.]

PRIESTS

(From the lower hall.)
Heavenly spirit upon us descending,
Kindle the ray everlasting of light;
To our decision thy righteousness lending.

AMNERIS

Gods, show me pity, my bosom relieving—
He is all innocent, save him, ye gods!
Now is my heart overwhelmed with its grieving!
[Rhadames is led by the guards across the stage and descends to the chamber below.—Amneris, on seeing him descend, utters a cry.]

RAMPHIS

(From below.)

Rhadames, Rhadames: thou hast betrayed the secrets of thy country to the enemy.

PRIESTS

Defend thyself!

RAMPHIS

He is silent.

ALL

Traitor!

RAMPHIS

Rhadames, Rhadames: thou wast absent from the camp the day before the battle!

PRIESTS

Defend thyself!

RAMPHIS

He is silent.

ALL

Traitor!

RAMPHIS

Rhadames, Rhadames: thou hast been false to country, king and honour.

PRIESTS

Defend thyself!

RAMPHIS

He is silent.

ALL

Traitor!
Rhadames, thus have thy judges decided,
Thou the cursed death of the traitor must die,
'Neath the high altar whose god thou'st derided,
Thou in thy sepulchre, living, must lie.

AMNERIS

A sepulchre, living! O wretches accursèd!
Naught of compassion or pity you know!
Yet on the mercy of Heaven you're nursèd!
[*Assailing the priests who reenter from the chamber of justice.*]
Priests, of a hideous crime you are guilty,
Tigers accursèd, in bloodshed exulting,
You are the earth and the Heavens insulting,
For on the guiltless your judgment will fall.

PRIESTS

He is a traitor. Let him die!

AMNERIS

(*To Ramphis.*)
Priest, on this man whom thou hast found guilty,
Poured I my love—to thee I had spoken—
Take thou the curse of a heart that is broken,
On thine own head may the penalty fall.

PRIESTS

He is a traitor. Let him die!

[*They depart slowly.*]
Impious priesthood, cursed are you all!
May the justice of Heaven hasten your fall!
[*Exit wildly.*]

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Scene III

The stage is divided into two floors.—The upper floor represents the temple of Vulcan resplendent with gold and light; the lower floor is a vault.—Long arcades vanishing in the gloom.—Colossal statues of Osiris, with crossed hands, support the pillars of the vault.

Rhadames is discovered at the foot of the steps by which he has descended into the vault.—Above two priests are letting down the stone that closes it.

RHADAMES

The fatal stone has now descended
Upon my tomb. No more the light
Shall I behold—no more behold Aïda—
Aïda, where art thou? Mayest thou ever
Happily live, my wretched fate never
Hearing! Ah, what groan was that? A phantom!
A vision! No, the form is human—
Heavens! Aïda!

AÏDA

Yes, I—

RHADAMES

Thou—in this tomb!

AÏDA

My heart presaged thy condemnation.
And to thy tomb's dread portal,
I crept, unseen by mortal.
And here, afar from every human eye,
In thy dear arms, I'll die.

RHADAMES

To die! So pure and lovely!
And through the yearning of thy heart
In the flower of youth to part
With life full-sated.
Thou whom for love the Heavens created,
And to destroy thee I was fated!

No, thou shalt not die.
Thou treasure, too high!
Thou art too lovely!

AÏDA

(In ecstasy.)
Seest thou where Death's bright angel
With heavenly radiance shining,
Would bring us to eternal joys,
On golden wings, above
Now heaven's gates are opening wide,
There we'll cease from all repining,
There only joy and peace abide,
And an immortal love.
[Singing and dancing of the priestesses in the temple above.]

AÏDA

That sad chanting!

RHADAMES

'Tis the sacred dance of the priesthood.

AÏDA

And our death chant sounding!

RHADAMES

(Trying to push back the stone over the vault.)
Ah, could my utmost pains
Remove this fatal stone!

AÏDA

In vain, for all is over,
No hope on earth remains.

RHADAMES

(With sad resignation.)
Ah, truly, truly!
(Approaches Aïda and supports her.)

AÏDA AND RHADAMES

O earth, farewell, farewell, thou vale of sorrow!
Dream of delight that vanisheth in woe,
Opens the sky on a glorious to-morrow
That in its brightness eternal shall glow.
[Aïda falls gently from Rhadames' arms.—Amneris appears dressed in mourning in the temple, and throws herself on the stone that closes the vault.]

AMNERIS

In peace may'st thou rest, my adored one, my love,
And Isis relenting, await thee above!

end of the opera