



Abbadia, Luigia (Genoa, 1821 – Milan, 1896). Italian mezzo-soprano. She sang the role of Giulietta in the premiere of Verdi's *Un GIORNO DI REGNO* at the TEATRO ALLA SCALA in MILAN in 1840. Her career spanned over thirty years, from her debut in Sassari in 1836 to her retirement in 1870, and during those decades she sang lead roles in Pacini's *Saffò*, Mercadante's *La vestale*, and Bellini's *Beatrice di Tenda*, among others. Donizetti composed the part of Ines for her (*Maria Padilla*, Milan, 1841). Although *Un giorno di regno* was a failure, the press looked favorably on Abbadia's performance. One critic (*Il Figaro*, 6 Sept. 1840), for instance, commented that she 'sang well and with complete commitment: the public rewarded her with lively applause, and hopes that this good young woman [will become] an artist of distinct merit.' Abbadia appeared in two other Verdian roles: Elvira in several productions of *ERNANI* and Cuniza in a revival of *OBERTO, CONTE DI S. BONIFACIO* at the Teatro alla Scala (1840). For the revival of the latter, Verdi composed a new CAVATINA and a DUET (for Cuniza and Riccardo) to accommodate the soprano's vocal strengths. The cavatina was probably never sung again in *Oberto*, but Verdi incorporated the duet into the opera's 1841 revival in GENOA.

HILARY PORISS

Lawton and Rosen (1974)

abandonnée, L. See SONGS.

Abbiati, Franco (Verdello, 14 Sept. 1898 – Bergamo, 22 Jan. 1981). Italian musicologist, music critic, and composer. His four-volume BIOGRAPHY of Verdi (1959) was particularly important because Abbiati's privileged access to primary source documents led to many new details and citations from unpublished letters and documents. Although later research has revealed errors and inaccuracies in transcription, some documents remain available to scholars only through this work.

GREGORY W. HARWOOD

Abbiati (1959); *DBI*; *OMO*

abbozzo. A stage in the compositional process, often preceded by the writing of shorter sketches, consisting of a continuous draft of a section, a piece, or an entire opera, written on systems of two or more staves containing the main melodic lines (with or without words) and some hints of harmony. From this stage Verdi proceeded to copy the music into the SKELETON SCORE. There is evidence of Verdi's practice of this kind of drafting from the beginning of his career through his last works.

FABRIZIO DELLA SETA

Della Seta (2000, 2002); Fairtile (1996); Gatti (1941a); Gossett (2001)

ACCADEMIA DE' FILODRAMMATICI (MILAN)

Accademia de' Filodrammatici (Milan). A society formed in MILAN in the eighteenth century to promote interest in spoken drama. In the 1830s the society developed a separate music school (called the SOCIETÀ FILARMONICA) directed by Pietro MASSINI and staged performances at the Teatro dei Filodrammatici in Milan. The ensemble's performances of Haydn's *Creation* in April 1834 and Rossini's *La Cenerentola* in April–May 1835 included Verdi as *maestro al cembalo*.

ROGER PARKER

Parker (1982b)

Accarini, Antonio. Mayor (*podestà*) of BUSSETO in the 1830s. In 1831–32 he supported Carlo VERDI's application to the MONTE DI PIETÀ for a scholarship for the young Giuseppe. In 1834 he was remotely involved in the controversy over Verdi's and Giovanni FERRARI's bids for the music post in Busseto (formerly held by Ferdinando PROVESTI); in 1836 he officially appointed Verdi to the post.

FRANCESCA PLACANICA

Matz (1993); Rizzo (2005); Walker

Ackté [Achté], Aino (Helsinki, 23 April 1876 – Nummela [Finland], 8 Aug. 1944). Finnish soprano. She sang in the premiere of the *Pezzi sacri* [see QUATTRO PEZZI SACRI] at the OPÉRA in PARIS in 1898. Daughter of baritone Lorenz Nicolai Achté and his wife (a soprano) Emmy (née Strömer), she was *prima donna* at the Opéra between 1897 and 1903. She sang the solo soprano part in the 1913 Birmingham (England) Festival performance of the *MESSA DA REQUIEM* and that year recorded a performance of Verdi's 'Willow Song' (*OTELLO*) on Edison cylinder.

LAURA BASINI

Karlson (1993)

Acté. See OPERA SUBJECTS, UNWRITTEN; DUMAS, ALEXANDRE (*père*).

Ad una stella. See SONGS.

adagio (Italian: 'slowly'). Term used frequently by contemporary commentators Abramo BASEVI, Emanuele MUZIO, and Carlo Ritorni to designate the slow movements of grand ARIAS, DUETS, and central FINALES. Although historically accurate, this term has the disadvantage of being overly specific, since Verdi and his contemporaries employed a range of tempo designations for their slow movements. [See also SLOW MOVEMENT and *LARGO CONCERTATO*.]

SCOTT L. BALTHAZAR

Balthazar (2004); Basevi (1859); Powers (1987); Ritorni (1841)

Addison & Hodson. Between 1845 and 1848 this LONDON publishing house produced selections from *NABUCCO*, *I LOMBARDI ALLA PRIMA CROCIATA*, *ATTILA*, and *I MASNADIERI*, as well as the *Sei romanze* (of 1845) [see SONGS]. Demand was greatest for 'Va pensiero, sull'ali dorate' from *Nabucco*, which appeared in four publications (two having the English text: 'Fancy, waft me in golden vision') between 1845 and 1846. Four of the twelve excerpts from *I masnadieri* were also published with English words; the other works appeared only with Italian texts.

GEORGE BIDDLECOMBE

Adelia degli Adimari. This reworking of the libretto of *Una VENDETTA IN DOMINO* (later titled *Un BALLO IN MASCHERA*) to appease the censors was entrusted to the poet Domenico BOLOGNESE by the management of the TEATRO SAN CARLO in NAPLES. Set in fourteenth-century FLORENCE, with the protagonist a Guelph leader, it was approved by the censors on 17 February 1858. Verdi objected to the changes and, disagreeing with the theater management, was released from his contract. [See also CENSORSHIP.] ILARIA NARICI

CVS; Giger (2010); Rosen (1999–2000)

Adrien. Stage name of Adrien RENOUX.

Adrienne Lecouvreur. See OPERA SUBJECTS, UNWRITTEN.

aesthetics. “Verdi’s Aesthetics”: a study bearing this title would have aroused his [Verdi’s] deepest rage.’ Despite this plausible thesis, in 1941 Alfred Einstein suggested that Verdi’s ‘true aesthetics’ would be something, ‘of course, to be deduced entirely from his works.’ Whether regarding aesthetics, dramaturgy, or theatrical effectiveness, Verdi’s thought obviously started with what Italian authors around 1840 referred to as ‘*posizione*’ and ‘*situazione*’: dramatic momentum as (in Giovanni Gherardini’s words) ‘continuous opportunity to give vent to emotions.’ Moments of heightened drama were already important to composers when choosing subjects. Unique for composers of the nineteenth century were pains such as Verdi took to find formulae for appropriate dramatic situations that were as concise as possible. Thus, for example, he consistently implored his librettist Francesco Maria PIAVE to restrict himself to ‘few words.’

Characteristic of this ‘aesthetic’ of concision is, for example, the breathless declaration of love ‘T’abbraccio, o Carlo/Amalia’ (*I MASNADIERI*, Act III, WGV, No. 9) – twenty-seven *prestissimo* measures in unison that, before the DUET proper, conjure up the longing of the two protagonists in less than thirty seconds. Verdi’s goal here, as always in his operas, is to bring to life succinctly drawn characters with precise melodies oriented toward their gestures and formed from speech rhythms: ‘I tell you frankly that, good or bad, my music is not just written casually for any situation; I try to give it a character appropriate to the drama.’ Much more often than of ‘character,’ Verdi spoke of ‘theatrical effect,’ which can be considered the core of his ‘aesthetic,’ lying behind what he described (when composing *AIDA*) as the *PAROLA SCENICA*—‘the word that clarifies and presents the situation neatly and plainly.’

Verdi’s dramaturgy of contrasts aims at concrete realization on-stage and, with its breathless tempo and precise pacing, seems to anticipate the nature of present-day life. Contrary to the way Verdi promoted himself, he was not only a representative of rural Italy, but also, in his way, a modern cosmopolitan. Abramo BASEVI emphasized the following as early as 1856: ‘Care and concision; therein lies the main key to Verdi’s impassioned genius.’ For exactly that reason, Verdi’s theater could still consistently be referred to at the end of the twentieth century as ‘realistic,’ even if this thesis were not to stand up to critical examination. In an oft-quoted letter to Clara MAFFEI, the composer advocated, in connection with SHAKESPEARE (and Balzac), ‘inventing truth,’ that is, that concise representation of general human characteristics could not

AHNFRAU, DIE

be ‘realistic’ in the sense of verisimilitude but rather it could elevate the realistic elements within the characters.

Given that many of Verdi’s plots seem realistic (at least on the surface), it is remarkable how obsessively his operas focus on death as the single, unavoidable objective of a life under constant threat. Leonora’s ‘oppressive terror’ (*Il TROVATORE*, Act IV) repeatedly shapes the dramatic situations, qualities of light and sound, musical performance, and, in the end, the ‘aesthetic’ of Verdi’s opera. Even when there is no hope for the characters—in either love or war—the focus is consistently on the moment and not on nihilistic visions of apocalypse or self-destructive staggering into a ‘Liebestod’. In Verdi’s operas no celestial authority is responsible for human error and even the most despicable criminals, such as Lady Macbeth (*MACBETH*) or Iago (*OTELLO*), are portrayed with unmistakable empathy. In the end, the gestural realization of dying, at the climax of many operas, shows how greatly the ‘aesthetic’ of such a theater of death is formed from the perspective of those who remain alive.

ANSELM GERHARD

De Van (1998); Gherardini (1847); Kimbell (1981); Petrobelli (1994); VH

Ahnfrau, Die. See OPERA SUBJECTS, UNWRITTEN; GRILLPARZER, Franz; *I MASNADIERI*.

Aida, opera in four acts, on a libretto by Antonio GHISLANZONI after a story written for the purpose by Auguste MARIETTE, which was elaborated into a detailed scenario by Camille DU LOCLE and Verdi. *First performance*: CAIRO, Opera House, 24 December 1871. *Impresario*: Draneht Bey [see PAUL DRANEHT (Pavlos Pavlidis)]. *Conductor*: Giovanni BOTTESINI. *Scenic design*: Philippe CHAPERON and Auguste RUBÉ (Acts I and IV), Edouard DESPLÉCHIN and Jean-Baptiste LAVASTRE (Acts II and III). *Costume design*: based freely on drawings by Mariette. *Cast for the premiere*: the King [Il Re] (bass): Tommaso COSTA; Amneris, his daughter (mezzo-soprano): Eleonora GROSSI; Aida, Ethiopian slave (soprano): Antonietta [Antonia] POZZONI ANASTASI; Radames, captain of the Egyptian guards (tenor): Pietro MONGINI; Ramfis, chief of the Egyptian priests (bass-baritone): Paolo MEDINI; Amonasro, King of Ethiopia and father of Aida (baritone): Francesco STELLER; the High Priestess (soprano): Marietta ALLIEVI; a Messenger (tenor): Luigi STECCHI-BOTTARDI. *Choruses and supernumeraries*: priests, ministers, captains, soldiers, functionaries, handmaidens, the Egyptian populace, and Ethiopian slaves and prisoners. *Scene*: Memphis and Thebes (in Egypt). *Period of the action*: during the reign of the pharaohs.

After the premiere of *DON CARLOS* (1867), Verdi spent several years searching for a new libretto. The resulting work, *Aida*, represents the culmination of the two major trends in his operatic output up to that point: an increasingly intense exploitation of structural and stylistic principles inherited from Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti; and a serious historical theme and elements of ‘local color’ (two central traits of the grand operas written for PARIS by Meyerbeer and Halévy). Written on commission by Khedive ISMA’IL of Egypt, *Aida* achieved a resounding success at its premiere in the recently opened opera house in Cairo. An even more influential second run of performances occurred at MILAN’s TEATRO

ALLA SCALA, beginning on 8 February 1872, conducted by Franco FACCIO. The cast, stronger than that in Cairo, featured Teresa STOLZ (Aida), Giuseppe FANCELLI (Radames), Maria WALDMANN (Amneris), and Francesco PANDOLFINI (Amonasro). *Aida* soon became a repertory staple throughout the world and remains today one of Verdi's most frequently performed works.

1. Origin, libretto, and composition
2. Plot synopsis
3. Genre, music, characterization, meanings
4. Performance, publication history, and influence

I. Origin, libretto, and composition

Early in 1870, the French impresario and librettist Du Locle sent Verdi a plot summary, in prose, that had been put together by (apparently) Mariette, a renowned French archaeologist in the employ of Isma'il, the khedive (ruler) of Egypt. The story, as in the eventual opera, took place at an unnamed time in ancient Egypt, under an unnamed pharaoh (called 'the king').

Isma'il hoped to persuade Verdi—or, if he said no, Gounod or Wagner—to compose an opera based on Mariette's story for performance at the opera house that his government had recently built in Cairo. A year before, Verdi had declined a commission from the khedive for a choral hymn to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal, but he eagerly accepted this operatic commission, turned Mariette's tale into a detailed scenario (in French) during days of side-by-side collaboration with Du Locle, translated the resulting scenario into Italian with his wife Giuseppina STREPPONI, and hired the experienced librettist Ghislanzoni to rework the result into proper verse for operatic setting.

Verdi and Ghislanzoni corresponded frequently during the versification process, with Verdi often objecting to Ghislanzoni's wordings, suggesting specific alternatives, or even demanding lines that would fit a melody that he clearly had already composed for the particular character and situation. Verdi also seems to have been the one to propose the striking visual arrangement of the opera's final scene, whereby the stage was split horizontally into an upper level and a lower one, each with its own characters and action. (In Mariette's story, Amneris did not participate in this final scene, and the priestly CHORUS and priestesses' dance music [see DANCE MUSIC AND BALLET MUSIC] were heard from offstage.)

The sets and costumes were prepared in Paris by leading designers associated with the OPÉRA, basing their work in part on detailed drawings of ancient Egyptian temples, clothing, jewelry, and the like that Mariette had provided. (The fantastical costume drawings by Henri de Montaut that are, in certain books, associated with the Cairo production are of unclear origin; they may never have been used for any production.) Verdi asked Mariette and others insistent questions about religious and musical traditions of ancient Egypt, but ended up following little or none of the advice he received. For example, he clearly wanted to include music for a high priestess to sing, and did so, despite being told clearly that priests in those days were males only.

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Figure 1 Poster for the first performances of *Aida* in Parma (1872), design by Adrien Marie; this was the third production of the opera following its premiere in Cairo and its European premiere in Milan.

Verdi gave great attention to finding the right singers and conductor for the Cairo premiere and, even more, for the subsequent first European production in Milan. He also insisted on high standards in other early productions (e.g., at PARMA later in 1872, and a major French-language production at the Opéra in 1880 for which he expanded the Triumphal Scene ballet).

2. Plot synopsis

A short prelude announces and then combines two themes: a gentle one—yearning and wilting—that will be heard several times when Aida enters the stage; and a firm one—stomping in equal notes down the scale—that will be associated with the priests. Here the latter is presented in imitative counterpoint, possibly hinting at the overly rule-bound behavior of the priestly class.

Act 1. Scene 1: The King's palace in Memphis. Ramfis and Radames are conversing about the ongoing battles between the Egyptians and their 'Ethiopian' enemies. (The word 'Ethiopia' in this libretto apparently does not mean the modern-day country of that name but Nubia, the country of dark-skinned people—militarily powerful during certain centuries of pharaonic reign—who lived directly to the south of Egypt, more or less in what is today Sudan.) Ramfis leaves, and Radames expresses his desire to be named commander and indicates (in the *ROMANZA* 'Celeste Aida') his intention to return triumphant from battle and win Aida's hand in marriage. Amneris, who is in love with Radames, enters and attempts, without success, to cajole him into revealing his feelings. Two themes heard in the strings toward the beginning of this DUET (at 'Quale insolita gioia!' and 'Forse l'arcano amore')—the first stately, the second indicating frantic jealousy—will recur later in the opera as markers of Amneris's public and private sides. The duet expands to a trio ('Dessa!') when Aida enters, weeping, and, with Radames uneasily watching, Amneris tries, with equal lack of success, to persuade the servant to reveal the source of her unhappiness; Aida insists that she weeps only for her unhappy homeland and the victims of war, and all three characters then sing their separate feelings, each unheard by the others.

The King arrives, with Ramfis and various priests and officials ('Alta cagion v'aduna'). A Messenger reports that Amonasro, king of the Ethiopian 'barbarians,' has invaded Egypt and set fire to the fields. The King reveals that Radames is to command the Egyptian troops. Everyone on-stage joins in a heavily accented war hymn ('Su! del Nilo al sacro lido'), except Aida, who (to herself) expresses fear and confusion about the upcoming battle, in which—as nobody on-stage but herself knows—her father will be leading the Ethiopian forces. Finally caught up in the enthusiasm (and fear for Radames's life), she joins the others in crying out for the Egyptian army to return as victors.

Everyone else leaves the stage, and Aida immediately wonders, in anguish, how those 'wicked words' could have come from her own lips (ARIA: 'Ritorna vincitor!'). An Egyptian victory means that her father will be brought to Egypt in chains. She briefly wishes for the destruction of her people's oppressors, then realizes that this would mean death for the man she loves. She ends her aria praying, 'Spezzami il cor, fammi morir! Numi, pietà del mio soffrir!' ('Break my heart, make me die! Gods, take pity on my suffering!').

Scene 2: Consecration Scene, within the Temple of Vulcan in Memphis. Offstage, the High Priestess and other priestesses invoke the god Ptah. ('Possente Fthà!': the libretto sometimes refers to Ptah by the name of the Roman god Vulcan—in Italian, Vulcano—presumably because the two gods had certain common traits; the Roman name may also have helped the audience appreciate the solemnity of the locale.) Ramfis and the priests, on-stage, reply in solemn,

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ecclesiastical-sounding chords. As the priestesses dance, Radames is led to the altar and his head is covered with a silver veil. Ramfis and the priests bless Radames's sword ('Il sacro brando'), and then Radames joins them in praying that the gods may defend the holy soil of Egypt ('Nume, custode e vindice'). In a coda, this consecration hymn alternates with a return of the priestesses' invocation of Ptah.

Act II. Scene 1: A room in Amneris's apartments, with perfumed vapors rising from tripods and young Moorish male slaves waving plumed fans. Radames's troops have prevailed, and the female slaves, while dressing Amneris for the triumphal celebrations, sing of Radames's reward: Amneris's hand in marriage (chorus: 'Chi mai fra gl'inni e i plausi'). Amneris ends each of their stanzas with a languorous phrase of readiness. This primarily choral opening also includes, as an interlude, a dance for 'little Moorish [male] slaves.' Seeing Aida approach, Amneris dismisses all the slaves. She tells Aida (duet: 'Fu la sorte dell'armi') that the Ethiopians lost the battle and, feigning sympathy, reminds her that love can heal sorrows. Aida sings, aside, her signature theme from the prelude, to words about the joy—and sorrows—of love ('Amore, amore, gaudio tormentoso'). Amneris tells her that Radames died in the battle. Aida reacts intensely: 'Misera! Per sempre io piangerò!' ('Wretched me! I shall weep forever!'). Amneris then admits that her statement was a lie, and Aida thanks the gods that Radames is still alive. Amneris, furious, announces that she is Aida's rival for Radames's love. Aida, her pride rising, nearly reveals that she is a princess herself, then falls at Amneris's feet and begs to be allowed this one happiness. Amneris threatens revenge if Aida does not give Radames up. The chorus repeats the war hymn from Act I, and, after Amneris leaves, Aida repeats her plea to the gods from the end of her Act I soliloquy.

Scene 2: Outside one of the city gates of Thebes. The Triumphal Scene begins with the entry of the King, the priests, and the rest of the court, while a grand march is sung by the chorus of Egyptians ('Gloria all'Egitto'), with interludes for the Egyptian women (lyrical) and Ramfis and the priests (their descending scalar theme from the prelude). Ancient-style straight trumpets play a new tune while the Egyptian troops and—in a ballet sequence—female dancers and the Moorish slave boys file in carrying sacred vessels, statues, and Ethiopian plunder. The King rewards Radames with his daughter's hand in marriage. At Radames's request, the Ethiopian prisoners are led in. Aida cries out 'Mio padre!' upon seeing Amonasro, who is dressed as an Ethiopian officer. Amonasro whispers to her not to reveal who he is (i.e., Ethiopia's king). He then presents himself to the Egyptians as an Ethiopian soldier ('Quest'assisa ch'io vesto vi dica') and pleads for leniency toward the prisoners ('Ma tu Re, tu signore possente'), and Aida and the other Ethiopians repeat his plea. Ramfis and the priests insist that the prisoners be killed, and the Egyptian people side with Amonasro, while Amneris expresses fury (in an aside) at the glances flashing between Radames and Aida. The King frees all the prisoners except—at Ramfis's urging—Aida and her father. The scene concludes with varied repetitions of music from earlier in the scene.

Act III [a single continuous scene]: The banks of the Nile, at night. The orchestra portrays the stillness of moonlight upon the river, and a solo flute suggests the nearby presence of a single shepherd. From a temple whose

portico is seen on-stage is heard a chorus of priests alternating with the High Priestess ('O tu, che sei d'Osiride'). Amneris and Ramfis, disembarking from a boat, enter the temple where she will pray that Radames truly love her (and forget Aida). Aida then enters for a secret meeting with Radames. In a *romanza* ('O patria mia . . . O cieli azzurri'), she expresses her fear that he will bid her farewell, in which case she imagines she will drown herself in the Nile, never seeing again the beautiful Ethiopian hills where she once was happy. Amonasro enters (duet: 'Ciel! mio padre!'), reveals that he knows her secret love, and offers a plan by which she can be joined in marriage to Radames and bring him back with her to Ethiopia ('Rivedrai le foreste imbalsamate'). She has only, he says, to worm one bit of information out of Radames: what path the Egyptian army will be taking the next day (so that the now-freed Ethiopians can attack them). Aida is horrified. Amonasro threatens her with images of slaughtered Ethiopians, blaming her for their deaths, then, describing her dead mother cursing her, he declares that Aida is no longer his daughter but a slave doing the Egyptians' bidding, and pushes her to the ground. Dragging herself to his feet, she promises to be worthy of her country, but also regrets that this will mean deceiving the man she loves ('O patria! quanto mi costi!'). As Radames arrives, Amonasro hides nearby to overhear. Radames reports to Aida (duet: 'Pur ti riveggo') that the Ethiopians have invaded again and that, after driving them out, he intends to claim her hand. Aida reminds him that the priests and Amneris will stand in their way and even have her and her father killed. She proposes that Radames flee with her to Ethiopia, which she describes in lyrical words and tones ('Là tra foreste vergini'). Radames refuses at first to 'abandon my fatherland and the altars of our gods' and 'this land where we first shared our love'; then, reminded by Aida of Amneris's vengefulness, he launches a *CABALETTA* ('Sì, fuggiam da questa mura') in which he agrees to flee with her to Ethiopia and she reminds him of the 'cool valleys and green fields' there that 'will be our wedding bed.' The duet completed, she cagily asks him how they might be safe from the Egyptian legions, and he explains that the mountain pass at Napata is empty until the next day, when the Egyptian troops will use it as they march to attack the enemy. Amonasro steps from behind the palm trees, reveals that he has heard the military secret, and promises that his own men will be there to stop the Egyptians. Radames is distraught at having betrayed his country ('Io son disonorato!'), Aida tries to reassure him that love will await him in Ethiopia, and Amonasro pulls him by the arm to get him to join—with himself and Aida—the Ethiopian troops who are waiting on the other side of the Nile. Amneris, Ramfis, priests, and guards come out of the temple, and, when Amneris (who immediately recognizes what is going on) calls Radames a traitor, Amonasro attempts to stab her with his dagger. Radames prevents this, helps Aida and Amonasro flee, and delivers himself to the mercy of the priests.

Act IV. Scene 1: A hall in the palace of the King. Standing near the door that leads to the underground judgment chamber, Amneris reflects sadly on intervening events: Aida has escaped, and Radames awaits a trial before the priests. Amneris is tempted to denounce him (because he has not returned her love) but decides to try to persuade him to declare his innocence, in which case she will try to arrange for him to be pardoned. Radames enters and, hearing

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Amneris's plan (duet: 'Già i sacerdoti adunansi'), promptly rejects it, declares himself ready to die, and blames Amneris for Aida's death. 'No, she is alive!' explains the Princess: Amonasro was killed in the melee but Aida slipped away. Amneris offers to save him if he agrees to give up Aida. He refuses, and (in a cabaletta with contrasting music for the two) she revels in her boundless hatred for him and he sings eloquently of dying for love of Aida ('Chi ti salva, sciagurato?' / 'È la morte, un ben supremo'). Radames leaves, and Amneris immediately regrets that her jealousy caused her to denounce him on the banks of the Nile. Ramfis and the priests file into the underground chamber, sing an unaccompanied chant in free rhythm ('Spirto del Nume'), and launch three accusations against Radames: revealing his country's secrets to the enemy, deserting his command on the day before a battle, and (a kind of summary) betraying his country, his king, and his honor. Each time, Radames responds with silence, the priests denounce him as a traitor ('Traditor!'), and Amneris—outside the chamber—prays to the gods to save him. The priests then announce the punishment: Radames will be sealed up, alive, in a vault 'beneath the altar of the offended god' (i.e., Ptah). The priests then march back up from the chamber, and Amneris assails them for punishing an innocent man. Left alone, she curses the 'hateful brood' ('Empia razza!'), calls upon Heaven's vengeance to strike them, and exits in a state of fury.

Scene 2: A horizontally split stage, the top revealing the interior of the Temple of Vulcan/Ptah, the bottom Radames's tomb. Radames reflects on his fate: never again to see the light of day, nor Aida. Aida comes out of the darkness and explains that she crept into the tomb in advance to die with him. Radames regrets her unnecessary self-sacrifice (duet: 'Morir! sì pura e bella!'). Aida, already delirious (perhaps for lack of oxygen), thinks she hears the angel of death coming to bear them away on golden wings ('Vedi? di morte l'angelo'). From the temple above are heard the hymns and dances of the priests and priestesses that were originally encountered in the Consecration Scene that ended Act I. Radames tries in vain to move the stone that has sealed the couple in. The lovers conclude by singing, separately and then together, a slow cabaletta to the words 'O terra, addio,' while Amneris, dressed in mourning, enters the temple and prostrates herself upon the stone in the floor that seals the vault. The opera ends with Amneris praying for Isis to receive Radames into Heaven, while the priests and priestesses continue to praise 'Immenso Fthà' and the strings play one last time a portion of the cabaletta theme associated with Aida—who has just expired in Radames's arms—and Radames—who will surely die soon after the curtain falls.

3. Genre, music, characterization, meanings

The initial enthusiasm for Verdi's new opera was tempered somewhat by complaints of various kinds. Some critics made him out to be aping the operas of Meyerbeer and Gounod, ignoring the fact that Verdi never felt compelled to remain within a purely Italianate tradition. Openly cosmopolitan in his cultural interests, he had composed three examples of French grand opera (*JÉRUSALEM*, *Les VÊPRES SICILIENNES*, and *Don Carlos*) and, in between them, a work that was closely similar in spirit and structure though to an Italian libretto (*La FORZA DEL DESTINO*). *Aida* can be seen as his final effort in that series.