

FROM THE SOFT, STIRRING NOTES OF THE PRELUDE TO THE MAGNIFICENT Triumphant March and the heart-wrenching finale, *Aida* has captured the imaginations of operagoers for nearly a century and a half. At first glance an epic, monumental drama of ancient Egypt, it is at its heart the simplest and most tragic of tales—an intimate story of loves forbidden, unrequited, and enmeshed in a struggle for imperial power. Verdi’s boldly atmospheric and colorful score never overwhelms the expressions of tenderness, jealousy, and longing that drive its three central characters: an Egyptian warrior, the enslaved Ethiopian princess he loves, and her royal mistress.

Few opera companies can match the grandeur and style of the Met’s production of *Aida*. Horse-drawn carriages lead a conquering army and its captives across the vast stage. Grand temples and moonlit riversides evoke an era thousands of years in the past. Colonnades and tombs rise and descend, while the voices of some of the world’s greatest singers bring the story to life—on stage and on screen.

This guide can help your students explore all aspects of *Aida*—its setting and archeological background, its musical architecture, and the passions at its core. The activities spotlight social and psychological connections among Verdi’s characters, as well as the compositional techniques through which his music brings them to life. Students will consider the Western European essence of this ancient Egyptian opera, as well as the relevance of its artistry a century and a half after its premiere. Calling attention to both the opera’s timeless truths and its cultural contradictions, this guide offers students knowledge and critical resources with which to enhance their enjoyment of this *Live in HD* production.



MONASTYRSKA



BORODINA



ALAGNA



GAGNIDZE

THE WORK

AIDA

Opera in four acts, sung in Italian

Music by Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

Libretto by Antonio Ghislanzoni

First performed on December 24, 1871, at the Khedivial Opera House, Cairo, Egypt

PRODUCTION

Fabio Luisi, Conductor

Sonja Frisell, Production

Gianni Quaranta, Set Designer

Dada Saligeri, Costume Designer

Gil Wechsler, Lighting Designer

Alexei Ratmansky, Choreographer

STARRING

(in order of vocal appearance)

Štefan Kocán

RAMFIS (bass)

Roberto Alagna

RADAMÈS (tenor)

Olga Borodina

AMNERIS (mezzo-soprano)

Liudmyla Monastyrska

AIDA (soprano)

Miklós Sebestyén

THE KING (bass)

Hugo Vera

A MESSENGER (tenor)

Jennifer Check

A PRIESTESS (soprano)

George Gagnidze

AMONASRO (baritone)

Production a gift of Mrs. Donald D. Harrington

The guide includes four types of activities. Reproducible student resources for the activities are available at the back of this guide.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:

a full-length activity, designed to support your ongoing curriculum

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS:

opportunities to focus on excerpts from *Aida* to enhance familiarity with the work

PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:

to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, calling attention to specific aspects of this production

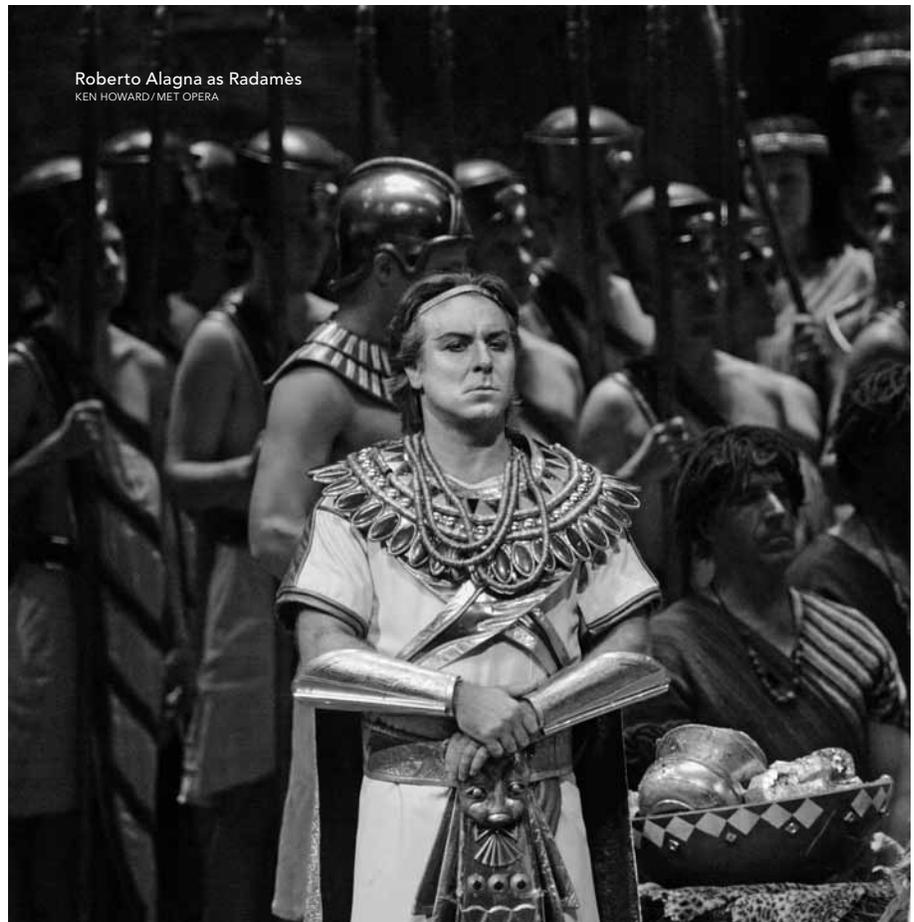
POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:

a wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students' views of the performing arts and humanities

The activities in this guide address several aspects of *Aida*:

- the structure of character relationships at the heart of this epic story
- Verdi's use of compositional technique to direct attention during the opera
- comparisons between the opera's fictional setting and historical Egypt
- the production as a unified work of art, involving creative decisions by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera

The guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Aida* whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, seeking to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts in general—as a medium of entertainment and as creative expression.



Roberto Alagna as Radamès
KEN HOWARD / MET OPERA

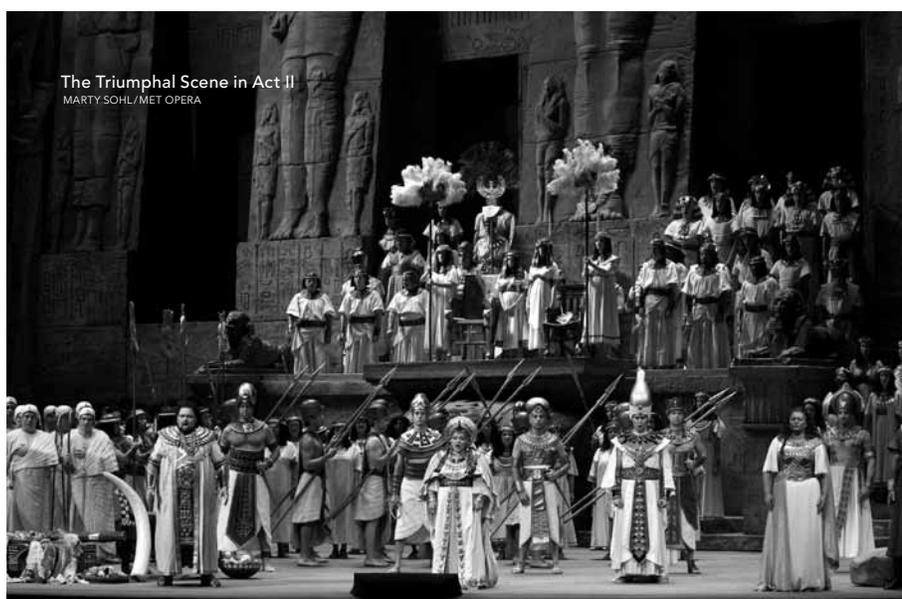
Egypt, during the reign of the Pharaohs

ACT I: *The royal palace in Memphis.* Radamès, an Egyptian officer, loves Aida, the Ethiopian slave of the Egyptian princess Amneris. He doesn't know that Aida, who returns his affections, is the daughter of the Ethiopian king. Amneris also loves Radamès.

When the high priest Ramfis warns Radamès of an impending new Ethiopian assault on Egypt, Radamès hopes to be made commander of the army: a victory would enable him to set his beloved free. Amneris realizes that Radamès is in love with her slave. When the king does appoint Radamès to lead the army, Aida finds herself torn between two loves: for Radamès and for her Ethiopian homeland. In a grand ceremony, Ramfis appoints Radamès the new commander.

ACT II: *The palace at Thebes.* News has arrived of Egypt's victory over Ethiopia and Amneris is preparing for Radamès's return. To confirm her suspicions about him and Aida, Amneris lets on that the commander has been killed. After observing her slave's grief, Amneris tells the truth, that he is alive. Now, detecting Aida's joyous relief, the princess knows her concern to be justified. She leaves for the victory celebration. Aida prays to her own gods.

The victorious army enters in a grand parade before the king, its Ethiopian captives trailing behind. Radamès is honored above all. Aida recognizes her father, Amonasro, among the prisoners, but he signals her not to reveal his identity. Amonasro pleads mercy for the captives. Radamès, in turn, asks the Egyptian king to overturn a priestly decree that the Ethiopians be killed. To honor his commander, the king not only agrees, but offers Radamès his daughter, Amneris, as bride.



VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian “mezzo” = middle, medium)

CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

BASS

the lowest male voice

ACT III: *On the banks of the Nile.* Together with Ramfis, Amneris enters the Temple of Isis to prepare for her wedding. Nearby, Aida secretly awaits Radamès’s arrival, while dreaming of her homeland. Amonasro appears and asks his daughter to serve Ethiopia by convincing Radamès to reveal Egypt’s battle plans. He watches from the shadows as Aida asks Radamès about the military plans. When he reveals them, Amonasro emerges and Radamès realizes what he has done just as Ramfis and Amneris leave the temple. Amonasro and Aida escape. Radamès surrenders, acknowledging his treason.

ACT IV: *The hall of judgment – A tomb below the temple.* Amneris tries to convince Radamès that she can save him—if only he will accept her in marriage. Radamès refuses and is led off to judgment. Amneris is left in a state of love, fury, and pain as she hears the priests sentence Radamès to be buried alive. Sealed into his tomb, Radamès discovers Aida, who has hidden there, determined to die with him. The lovers meet their fate as Amneris remains behind atop the tomb, praying for them.

WHO'S WHO IN AIDA

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Aida	Princess of Ethiopia, imprisoned in Egypt as Amneris's slave	ah-EE-dah	Soprano	Though powerless to all appearances, Aida holds the key to the central drama of the opera.
Amneris	Princess of Egypt	ahm-NEH-rees	Mezzo-soprano	Amneris is honestly, but hopelessly, in love with Radamès.
Radamès	Egyptian warrior	rah-dah-MAYS	Tenor	Radamès is torn between his love for Aida and his devotion to the kingdom of Egypt.
Amonasro	King of Ethiopia	ah-mo-NAHZ-ro	Baritone	When Amonasro is captured by the Egyptians, only his daughter knows he's actually the king.
Ramfis	High priest	RAHM-fees	Bass	The true power behind the Egyptian throne
The King			Bass	Amneris's father, the King plays only a minor role in the opera.

Who Do You Love: A Close Look at the Interpersonal Relationships in *Aida*

IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide. It may help to provide colored pencils and several colors of sticky notes as well. These can be used in the construction of sociograms (see Step 3).

You will also need the audio selections from *Aida* available online or on the accompanying CD.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies (Sociology/Psychology)

Language Arts (character development and relationships)

Mathematics (graphic depictions of information)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To experience an analytic approach to recording and understanding complex social situations
- To think critically about character development and narrative structure
- To consider the effects of mixed feelings upon decision-making
- To appreciate the use of dramatic and musical structure in delineating characters and their relationships
- To become familiar with the characters in *Aida*, the complexity of their relationships, and Verdi's genius in depicting them for the opera audience

For all its visual splendor and exotic atmosphere, *Aida* is fundamentally an intimate tale of love and social responsibility. At its center is the romantic triangle of Radamès, Aida, and Amneris, which by extension mirrors Radamès's devotion to his native Egypt and Aida's to her beloved Ethiopia. In this Classroom Activity, students will use a tool from the social sciences, the sociogram, to untangle the complicated allegiances and animosity within and among Verdi's characters. They will:

- listen to operatic selections revealing characters' attitudes and concerns
- use a clearly defined method to take notes on the feelings expressed
- construct sociograms depicting the feelings and relationships that drive the opera
- predict, explain, and debate characters' decisions based on the sociograms they have constructed

STEPS

Aida is a grand spectacle set in an ancient society as imagined by 19th-century French and Italian intellectuals and artists. Though its setting and depiction of Egyptian culture may be fictitious, the opera rests on timeless truths about social relations: love, hate, manipulation, seduction, betrayal, responsibility, and belief. Verdi was interested in recent advances in archeology, but more importantly, he might also have considered another social science that blossomed during his lifetime: sociology. In this activity, students will use a tool from that discipline—the sociogram—to explore relationships among Verdi's Egyptian and Ethiopian characters.

STEP 1: INTRODUCING THE SOCIOGRAM

The sociogram, a graphic representation of interpersonal relations, can be used to illuminate the love triangle of *Aida*. Introduce the concept of the sociogram to your class by distributing the reproducible *Data 2 Ways* on page 23 of this guide. This reproducible shows two different ways to notate the relationships among a group of fourth-grade children (a smaller version can be seen below).

The data table at the top of the page is simply a record of the children's feelings. The data indicates each child's feelings toward one of the others. Three indicators are used:

- + means the child likes the other
- means the child does not like the other
- ~ means the child feels neutral toward the other

Reading the table from left to right:

- Abigail doesn't like Ben, but likes Charlie and Diana.
- Ben doesn't like Abigail, likes Charlie, and is neutral toward Diana.
- Charlie doesn't like Abigail, likes Ben, and is neutral toward Diana.
- Diana likes Abigail and Ben, and is neutral toward Charlie.

At the bottom of the page, a sociogram provides a graphic depiction of the same data. It doesn't simply record, but *shows*, the relationships among the children. Note that three types of symbols are used in the sociogram:

- Shapes: A triangle represents a male; a circle represents a female.
- Lines: A solid line represents "like." A dotted line represents "dislike." A wavy line represents "neutral feeling."
- Arrowheads: The arrowheads indicate the direction of the feeling. Where feelings are mutual, a single line appears with two arrowheads.

Allow students a few minutes to compare the data table and sociogram and to trace the relationships depicted. Do these sound like typical relationships among fourth-grade boys and girls? Why? (The sociogram reveals strong intra-gender friendships, but different—and developmentally typical—patterns of inter-gender feelings: The girls are more interested in boys than the boys are in girls.)

Sociologists often collect data for sociograms by observing behavior. In Step 2, students collect their data by listening to conversations from *Aida*.

STEP 2: DATA COLLECTION

Students can collect data on the characters' feelings by "eavesdropping" on conversations in several scenes from *Aida*. The class should listen to each excerpt as a group, reading along with the texts and translations included on the reproducible *Listening In*. (If appropriate in your classroom, they may enjoy discussing the excerpt as well.)

COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness
Standards for Reading: Grades 6-12

Key Ideas and Details

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS

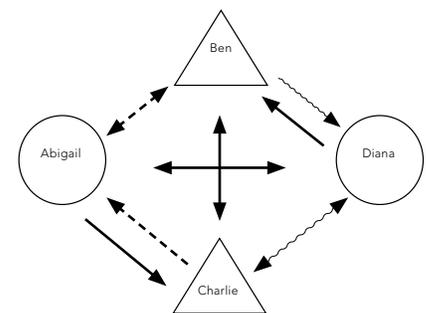
Historical Thinking Standards for
Grades 5-12

Standard 1: Chronological Thinking

B. Identify the temporal structure of a historical narrative or story.

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

D. Differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.





Olga Borodina as Amneris
JONATHAN TICHLER / MET OPERA

Then they should use the data table on the reproducible *Sociological Observations* to record their observations about the feelings expressed, before going on to the next excerpt.

Notes on filling out the data table:

The activity explores feelings and relationships among the opera's three principals:

- the Egyptian military leader, Radamès,
- the Egyptian princess, Amneris, and
- the Ethiopian princess, Aida, who is enslaved to Amneris.

These are listed on the data table's vertical axis. But the musical excerpts also reveal information about relations with other characters, such as the Ethiopian king Amonasro, as well as about characters' feelings toward their native lands. These additional topics are listed on the horizontal axis.

Students should add indicators (+, -, and ~ symbols) after listening to each excerpt, then compile their observations at Step 3.

Students need not include an indicator in every single cell for every excerpt. If there is no information about a character's feelings toward a person or place, they may leave the corresponding cell blank.

A LISTENING GUIDE TO THE EXCERPTS

EXCERPT 1

Track 1 presents the very first notes of Verdi's prelude to *Aida*. This melody represents Aida herself. Students should listen for it as the excerpt continues.

Tracks 2 through 6, from early in Act I, Scene 1, summarize *Aida's* romantic triangle in less than a minute and a half.

Track 2: Radamès expresses his hope that the goddess Isis will choose him as leader of Egypt's forces in the coming battle with Ethiopia.

Track 3: Amneris asks Radamès whether he has another, more romantic dream. She evidently hopes that dream involves herself.

Track 4: Radamès worries that Amneris has discovered his love for Aida.

Track 5: Amneris becomes suspicious of Radamès's hesitation.

Track 6: The orchestral phrase heard in Track 1 wordlessly brings Aida onto the stage, and Radamès responds by exclaiming "It's her!"

Students should be able to discern from this excerpt that Radamès has strong positive feelings for both his native Egypt and for Aida, while Amneris is attracted

to Radamès. No information is provided about Aida. Some students may infer that Radamès is not attracted to Amneris.

The entire excerpt, including an elision between Tracks 5 and 6, can be heard in **Track 7**.

EXCERPT 2

Tracks 8 through 12, from later in Act I, Scene 1, reveal Aida's feelings toward her native Ethiopia and toward Radamès.

Track 8: Here, the priests, ministers and captains of Egypt all cry out for war and for the extermination of their Ethiopian enemy.

Track 9: Aida herself leads the call for victory.

Track 10: Alone now, Aida catches herself: How could she wish for Egypt's victory—which means the defeat of Ethiopia and her father, its king?

Track 11: Aida changes position, calling now for the gods to bring her father victory, and to return her to him.

Track 12: But she catches herself yet again: How can she call for the defeat of her beloved Radamès, the only hope in her enslavement?

This excerpt should provide students with a sense of Aida's ambivalent feelings toward Egypt and her homeland, complicated by her conflicting loves for her father and Radamès.

The entire excerpt, including an elision between Tracks 10 and 11, can be heard in **Track 13**.

EXCERPT 3

In Act II, Scene 1, with Radamès not yet returned from war, Amneris tries to confirm her suspicion that he and Aida are in love.

Track 14: Amneris announces to Aida that she, the daughter of Pharaoh, is Aida's rival for the love of Radamès.

Track 15: Aida responds with royal ferocity, then remembers that Amneris knows her only as a slave, not as a princess of Ethiopia. She suddenly worries that she has revealed more than she intended.

Track 16: Aida's tone changes to one of submission and supplication.

Track 17: Amneris flaunts her certainty that she will win Radamès over.

This excerpt conveys the mutual dislike of Aida and Amneris, but it also reveals them as wily adversaries, Amneris through assertion and Aida by stealth.

The entire excerpt can be heard in **Track 18**.

FUN FACT Within two years of its Cairo premiere, *Aida* had been staged in Milan, New York City, and Buenos Aires, followed by more than 100 productions over the next decade, including a performance in Australia.



The Khedivial Opera House, site of *Aida's* premiere



FUN FACT *Aida* is the second most performed opera in the history of the Met, with a total of 1,122 performances through the end of the 2011–12 season. Only Puccini's *La Bohème* has been heard more frequently (1,245 times). The photo above shows the 1908 staging.

EXCERPT 4

Act III finds Aida outside the Temple of Isis. Awaiting a secret rendezvous with Radamès, she is surprised by her father, who has escaped Egypt's prison. Amonasro plays on his daughter's love of country. Aida finds herself caught between responsibility and romance.

Track 19: Amonasro lays out the strategic situation: Ethiopia's army can be victorious if they learn Egypt's intended path of attack—and only Aida is in a position to gather that intelligence. She seems not to understand.

Track 20: Amonasro explains that she can coax the information out of her lover—a plan Aida instinctively rejects.

Track 21: Amonasro plays on Aida's feelings, accusing her of having become nothing more than a slave, unworthy to be his daughter.

Track 22: Aida insists on her loyalty to Ethiopia.

In Excerpt 2, Aida's conflicting loves caused her worry, but here the stakes are raised. As her father plays upon her feelings, she feels forced to take sides—even by betraying her beloved Radamès.

The entire excerpt can be heard in **Track 23**.

STEP 3: CONSTRUCTING A SOCIOGRAM

Having collected data on the relationships in *Aida*, students can now construct their sociograms, using the reproducible *Sociogram Construction Site*.

The key at the bottom of the reproducible includes symbols for a basic set of social relationships. (Notice the addition of squares as symbols for places. Students may enjoy enhancing the list by devising connectors of different thicknesses or colors to

- distinguish between weak and stronger feelings,
- distinguish friendship and romantic love,
- distinguish romantic love from familial love, or
- depict such emotions as jealousy, guilt, and shame.

Also, while simple geometric shapes are generally used in sociograms, students may enjoy color-coding the shapes to include even more information, such as age or social status.

The arrangement of elements in a sociogram is a matter of choice. Students may prefer to put one character (e.g., Aida) at the center of the diagram, just as Verdi puts her at the center of the opera. Or they may prefer to create a web like the one seen on the reproducible *Data 2 Ways*. They should feel free to experiment with



A scene from Act I
MARTY SOHL/MET OPERA

different arrangements of characters and objects. (Sticky notes can make it easier to try different configurations.)

STEP 4: DISCUSSING THE SOCIOGRAM

Since each student will have constructed his or her own diagram of the relationships in *Aida*, it can be useful to have students share, explain, and discuss their choices. Depending on their awareness of the opera and its resolution, they can use their diagrams to predict and/or explain Aida's, Radamès's, and Amneris's behaviors in the remainder of Act III and in Act IV.

STEP 4A (OPTIONAL)

After discussing the characters' "future" behavior, students may find it instructive to listen to a fifth excerpt: the scene in which Aida does betray Radamès.

EXCERPT 5 (OPTIONAL)

Act III comes to an end with a fateful meeting between Aida and Radamès. Aida convinces her lover that their only salvation is escape—but she also has another intention.

Aida, Egypt, and Verdi: All Is Not as It Seems

With its temple on the banks of the Nile, its prayers to Ptah, and its famous sealed tomb, the tale of *Aida* seems to come straight from the papyri of ancient Egypt. It doesn't. Verdi and his librettist, Antonio Ghislanzoni, used a story created by the prominent French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette (who also oversaw the design of the sets and costumes for the opera's original production). There is no evidence that Mariette's ideas came from anywhere but his own imagination—his general sense of an "ancient Egyptian" aesthetic based on archeological finds from several centuries and dozens of dynasties. There are also deliberate historical inaccuracies: for instance, Egyptologists in Mariette's day knew that only male priests, never priestesses, presided in Egyptian temples. But Verdi knew that priestesses made for a better musical story.

It is sometimes reported that *Aida* was composed to celebrate the opening of the Suez Canal, which in fact took place in November 1869, two years before the opera's premiere. *Aida* had its first performance at the newly built Khedivial Opera House in Cairo (which had opened in 1869 with Verdi's earlier *Rigoletto*) in December 1871. As for Verdi himself, he never traveled to Egypt and treated *Aida*'s opening at Milan's La Scala six weeks later as its true world premiere.



Track 24: Aida and Radamès sing of their plan to keep their love safe by escaping together—though a final chord indicates that all may not be as idyllic as it seems.

Track 25: Aida asks an apparently innocent question: Is there an escape route free of Egyptian troops?

Track 26: Radamès answers confidently but also vaguely.

Track 27: Aida presses the point. (You may want to pause here to have students guess at Radamès’s reaction: Why is Aida not satisfied with his earlier response?)

Track 28: Radamès reveals the army’s path. (Again, students may enjoy guessing what comes next—whether this revelation will be of consequence.)

Track 29: Amonasro appears. He has heard the secret and reveals that he is Aida’s father and king of Ethiopia. Radamès realizes that he has betrayed his homeland.

The entire excerpt can be heard in **Track 30**.

FOLLOW-UP: Having analyzed the social relationships that bind and divide the characters in *Aida*, students are prepared to consider a question particularly relevant to adolescents: Must feelings and social roles dictate behavior? Does Aida do the right thing in eliciting key intelligence from Radamès? Does she have a choice? Students can write persuasive essays elaborating their views—and personal experiences—on the influence of love, peer and family pressures, and self-image in making difficult life decisions.

FUN FACT Roughly a year passed between the time Verdi finished *Aida* and its Cairo premiere: the newly built sets and costumes were stranded in Paris because of the Franco-Prussian War.



Egypt's Fascinating Past

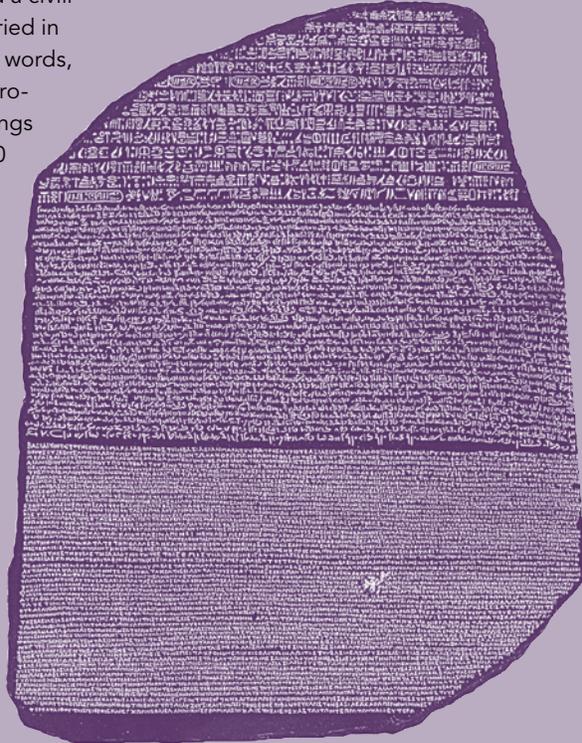
The term “ancient Egypt” refers to a multitude of places and a civilization spanning nearly 4,000 years, whose remains were buried in sand and history for another millennium and a half. (In other words, we are closer in time today to the latest known Egyptian hieroglyphs, which were created around 400 CE, than those writings are to the first hieroglyphs ever carved in stone around 3100 BCE!)

Around 830 CE, nearly two centuries after the Arab conquest of Egypt, the Caliph Al-Mamun is said to have made his way inside a gigantic building of longstanding mystery: the Great Pyramid of Giza. But the modern history of Egyptology doesn't begin until 1798, when the French army under Napoléon Bonaparte made its way to Egypt.

The following year, a French soldier stumbled across a rock inscribed in three writing systems—hieroglyphs, a later Egyptian script, and ancient Greek. Since all three represented the same text, and Greek was still familiar, the Rosetta Stone (right) became the key to understanding the writings of ancient Egypt. Egyptology was born.

French, German, and British explorers, trained in the new social science of archeology, flocked to Egypt throughout the 19th century, taking away thousands of artifacts. Their expeditions filled the museums of Europe and North America—the Louvre in Paris, the British Museum in London, Berlin's New Museum, and the Brooklyn and Metropolitan Museums in New York—with sculptures, architectural elements, papyri, and mummies in painted sarcophagi. Westerners were fascinated by the objects arriving from exotic desert landscapes. Ancient Egyptian shapes and colors came to influence Western clothing, hairstyles, make-up, and architecture. Pharaonic mysteries filtered into books and movies.

Today, the remaining relics of ancient Egypt are protected as the patrimony of the modern Egyptian state and form a major tourist attraction. Twenty-first-century students can learn more about Egypt's fascinating past at a fine website created by Egypt's Center for Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage, eternalegypt.org. Other authoritative websites include the British Museum's ancientegypt.co.uk, the BBC's bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/egyptians, and the Brooklyn Museum's interactive Mummy Chamber at tinyurl.com/brooklynmummy.



In the Spotlight: A Close Look at Voice as a Narrative Tool (Act II, Scene 2)

Filmmakers direct an audience’s attention by alternating between close-ups, long shots, and shots from different characters’ perspectives. An opera composer like Giuseppe Verdi performs a similar feat with musical means. Act II, Scene 2 of *Aida*, in which the victorious Egyptian army marches into Thebes, followed by its prisoners (and accompanied in the Metropolitan Opera production by an array of carriages and live animals), offers a prime example.

In the music heard in **Track 31**, Aida has discovered her father among the prisoners (though only she knows him to be the Ethiopian king). As the track begins, Radamès sings of the sorrow he sees in her expression. Within moments, Amneris, misinterpreting his sympathy, comments on Radamès’s desire for Aida and her own yearning for vengeance. Then Amonasro, together with the Ethiopian prisoners, the people of Egypt, and their king all sing of mercy for the vanquished. All of this is heard at the same time. In a movie, it would be a “cast of thousands” scene. Then suddenly Aida’s voice soars wordlessly above the throng—the musical equivalent of a close-up.

Track 32 takes place a few moments later. The assembled crowd sings “Glory to Egypt”—Egyptians for their victory, Ethiopians for their conqueror’s mercy. In **Track 33**, the priests join in, stressing the role of the goddess Isis against the same martial rhythm. **Track 34** provides another close-up on the despairing Aida. The choruses of Egyptians, Ethiopians, and priests sing on: Radamès worries that, as the victorious captain, he will have to marry Amneris; and Amneris believes her dreams are about to come true—yet Aida’s grief soars above them all.

In **Track 35**, Verdi “cuts” to a different close-up: we hear Amonasro hurriedly, stealthily encouraging his daughter to take heart. Then Verdi promptly turns back to the main action. For a brief moment at the start of **Track 36**, we hear Radamès continue his plaint, then Amneris, Amonasro, and the rest continue their parts. At last, in **Track 37**, six soloists and a full chorus restore order with the original “Glory to Egypt” (heard in Track 32), initiating the grand orchestral and choral climax of **Track 38**. But thanks to the genius of Verdi’s writing, amid dozens of triumphant voices and instruments Aida’s distinctive soprano soars above the throng again and again. Against the power of mighty Egypt, the slave’s voice asserts itself—right up until a reprise of the familiar Triumphal March brings the proceedings to a close (See *Musical Highlight: Five Little Pitches*.)

The entire sequence can be heard in **Track 39**.

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS ARE BRIEF OPPORTUNITIES TO

- help students make sense of opera
- whet their interest in upcoming *Live in HD* transmissions

Each focuses on audio selections from *Aida* available online at metopera.org/education or the accompanying CD. Texts and translations are available in the back of this guide.

These “mini-lessons” will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They’re designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curriculum. Feel free to use as many as you like.

Five Little Pitches: A Close Look at *Aida*'s Triumphal March (Act II, Scene 2)

Few operatic melodies are more familiar than the march that accompanies Radamès's victorious army into the city of Thebes. Certainly few are simpler. The theme, played by a small chorus of trumpets, comprises only five different pitches (**Track 40**). The phrase is heard twice (**Track 41**), then the same notes are rearranged into a new melody to form a middle section (**Track 42**), before the original phrase recurs one more time (**Track 43**). In **Track 44**, Verdi repeats this pattern, but in a seemingly unrelated key. **Track 45** adds a simple ornamentation to the middle section that keeps playing when the main melody returns to conclude the march in **Track 46**.

The Triumphal March is one of very few passages in which Verdi sought to bring genuine historical effect to *Aida*. Recent archeology had uncovered simple, valveless horns, which prompted Verdi to commission special trumpets in an attempt to recreate the spare, stirring tones the ancient Egyptians might have heard when celebrating a victory.

The composer turned out to be more historically accurate than he could have known. Half a century after *Aida*, in 1925, a pair of horns was found in the tomb of King Tutankhamen. One was tuned in A flat, the other in B—precisely the same two keys Verdi had chosen for his triumphal march!

Please note that all tracks are orchestral only (no reproducible pages). The entire piece can be heard in **Track 47**.



West Meets East: A Close Look at Verdi's Exotic View of Egypt

For all its Egyptian splendor, *Aida* is firmly rooted in the European musical tradition. This is nowhere more apparent than in the settings of two of the opera's most "Egyptian" texts: the battle cry "Su! del Nilo al sacro lido" ("Up! To the sacred shore of the Nile," **Track 48**) and the chorus in the triumphal scene, "Gloria al Egitto" ("Glory to Egypt," **Track 32**). Both are closely modeled on Western military marches. Even the famous Triumphal March (see *Musical Highlight: Five Little Pitches*) is Western in rhythm and tempo.

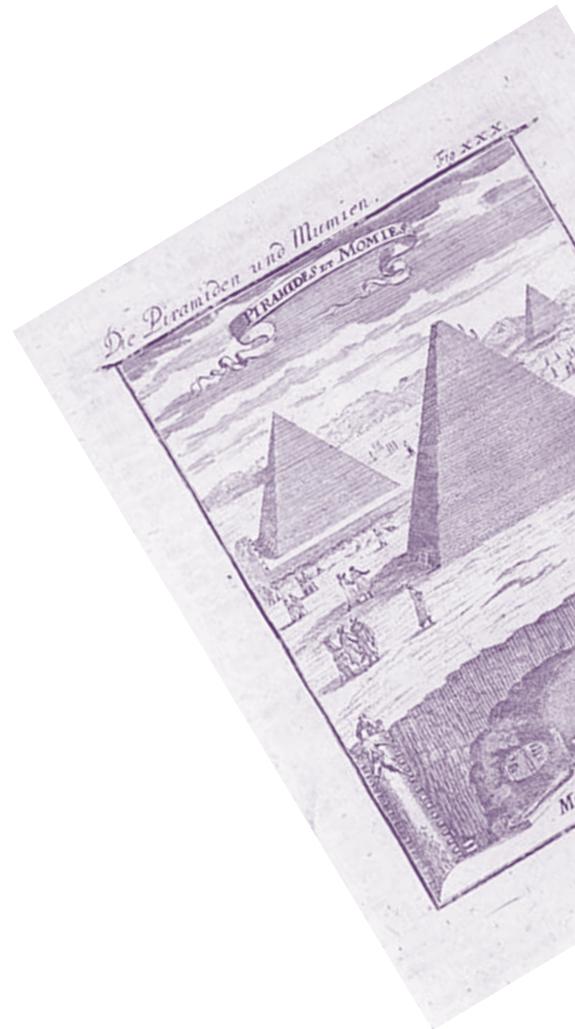
The few bits of orientalism in the score of *Aida* are mostly heard from offstage. For instance, Act I, Scene 2, opens with the singing of an unseen priestess as she prays to the god Ptah (**Track 49**). Her song is sinuous and lush, with a distinct Middle Eastern flavor, accompanied at the end by a chorus of priestesses in dark, mysterious harmony. (Interestingly, Verdi had reason to know there were no female priestesses in Egypt. He apparently consulted with an authority on ancient Egypt before deciding to create some.)

Supposed sounds of the East can also be heard at the beginning of Act III, which takes place on the banks of the Nile. To a very soft, sparse accompaniment of strings (**Track 50**), an undulating flute emerges, beckoning and teasing with trills and leaps like a genie rising from a lamp (**Track 51**). Yet the priests and priestesses ostensibly dedicated to the goddess Isis sound more like Christian monks practiced in Gregorian chant—about as European as it gets (**Track 52**).

The entire priests of Isis sequence can be heard on **Track 53**.

Prayers to Ptah are heard once more at the end of the opera, but these differ from the serpentine chant of Act I's priestess. In **Track 54**, Radamès and Aida, entombed alive beneath the temple, share a final duet. They are interrupted in **Track 55** by the percussive sounds of a priestly invocation. This prayer has less of Act I's Eastern exoticism. It peaks and falls incessantly, steady as a living heart, impregnable as the Great Pyramid. Meanwhile the lovers prepare for death, gasping, in **Track 56**: "Heaven opens!" Any contrast between Eastern and Western music has been supplanted by a more universal opposition: between the bland persistent beat of a physical heart and the lyricism of a spiritual one, lovely and liquid, though doomed.

This excerpt from the final scene can be heard, continuously, on **Track 57**.



Supporting Students During *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

Thanks to print and audio recording, much about opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself brings vital layers of sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheet to the transmission to fill out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Ratings matrices invite students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that call upon careful, critical thinking.

The basic activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *Aida*, the other activity sheet, *Secrets of the Stage*, invites students to build on their enjoyment of the Metropolitan Opera's fabulous staging by imagining what goes on behind the scenes during a performance of this grand opera.

The Performance Activity reproducibles can be found in the back of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up *after* the *Live in HD* transmission.

FUN FACT In 1987, tenor Plácido Domingo led a cast of hundreds of singers, musicians, and extras in a production of *Aida* at the Temple of Luxor in Egypt.

Rocking the Pyramids: Comparing the *Aidas* of Two Different Centuries

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? This discussion will offer students an opportunity to review the notes on their *My Highs & Lows* sheet, as well as their thoughts about this Met production—in short, to see themselves as *Aida* experts.

Aida is one of the most widely performed operas in the repertoire. At the Met alone, it has been seen more than 1,100 times over a period of 125 years. Unlike many other great stage works, its story is entirely original and not based on an existing source (if of course inspired by historical and archeological findings about ancient Egypt). That's why many people were surprised when an entirely new telling of *Aida's* story arrived on Broadway in the year 2000.

The show, officially entitled *Elton John & Tim Rice's Aida*, features music and lyrics by two of the 20th century's best-known pop and rock artists. It ran on Broadway for more than four years, toured across the U.S. and in 20 other countries, and has been widely performed in school and amateur productions.

Students can sample the latter-day *Aida* in videos available on *youtube.com* and learn about its history on a number of other websites. They may enjoy comparing Elton John's pop tunes, which feature elements of gospel, reggae, and Motown, among others, to their favorite moments from Verdi's *Aida*. In particular, it can be enlightening to contrast the plots of the opera and the musical. As a synopsis reveals, the new work weaves a more elaborate plot around the original:

- *Aida* is captured in the war by Radamès.
- He gives the slave girl to his betrothed, Amneris, but later comes to fall in love with her.
- Radamès, in line to become king of Egypt himself, finds himself caught up in a conspiracy to kill Amneris's father, the reigning king.
- *Aida* is sensitive to Amneris's emotional insecurity, evidenced by the princess's love of fashionable clothes.
- A newly introduced character, Radamès's father, tries to have *Aida* killed to keep her from his son.
- *Aida* and Amonasro plan to escape Egypt not during a battle, but during Radamès and Amneris's wedding party.
- *Both* *Aida* and Radamès are charged with treason.
- The king, not priests, declares the death sentence.
- Amneris ends the musical in line to become queen herself.

IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at the *Live in HD* transmission of *Aida*. Optional resources on the works discussed during the activity can be found with a simple online search.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies (History and Culture)

Music

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explore changes in cultural forms and values across history
- To compare and contrast the creative choices of two different sets of artists at two periods in history
- To consider what aspects of a work are timeless and which are products of a particular time, place, and set of circumstances
- To incorporate the experience of *Aida* into broader understandings of creative works and cultural forms

COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness
Standards for Reading: Grades 6-12

Craft and Structure

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS

Historical Thinking Standards for
Grades 5-12

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

F. Appreciate historical perspectives.

Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

D. Draw comparisons across eras and regions in order to define enduring issues.

- Neither jealous nor vengeful, Amneris arranges for the lovers to be entombed together—a sign of her respect and affection for them both. Depending on your class’s interests and response to Verdi’s *Aida*, activities comparing the opera and musical can take one of two different directions.

Students can compare and contrast the plots of the two works, debating their views of the changes made by Elton John, Tim Rice, and their librettists. Which version strikes students as more emotionally authentic? Which feels truer to the setting of ancient Egypt? Why?

Students can try their own hands at “adapting” Verdi’s *Aida*. Would they make choices similar to those of the Broadway or Metropolitan Opera team? What circumstances and motivations can they imagine to

- elaborate on the backstory
- rearrange the structure of personal relationships (explored in the Classroom Activity) or
- change specific plot points in the original opera?

Individually or in groups, students may enjoy presenting their new *Aidas* as short stories, skits, or music videos.

AIDA

Aida Educator Guide

Track List

Met Radio Recording
January 7, 1989

AIDA

Aprile Millo

RADAMÈS

Plácido Domingo

AMNERIS

Stefania Toczyska

AMONASRO

Sherrill Milnes

RAMFIS

Paul Plishka

CONDUCTOR

James Levine

Metropolitan Opera
Orchestra and Chorus

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY: WHO DO YOU LOVE

- 1 ACT I: Orchestral prelude; Aida theme
- 2–6 ACT I: Radamès; wishes to be the leader in battle
- 7 Tracks 2–6 continuously
- 8–12 ACT I: Egyptian’s cry for war against the Ethiopian enemy
- 13 Tracks 8–12 continuously
- 14–17 ACT II: Amneris and Aida; fighting over their love for Radamès
- 18 Tracks 14–17 continuously
- 19–22 ACT III: Amonasro and Aida; Father/Daughter duet (“Ciel! mio padre”)
- 23 Tracks 19–22 continuously
- 24–29 ACT III: Radamès, Aida, and Amonasro; the lovers plan for escape with an unexpected twist
- 30 Tracks 24–29 continuously

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT: IN THE SPOTLIGHT

- 31–38 ACT II: Radamès, Ramfis, priests, Aida, Amneris, Amonasro, the King, and chorus; the victorious Egyptian army marches into Thebes (“Gloria all’Egitto”)
- 39 Tracks 32–38 continuously

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT: FIVE LITTLE PITCHES

- 40–46 ACT II: Orchestra; Triumphal March (“Marcia”)
- 47 Tracks 40–46 continuously

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT: WEST MEETS EAST

- 48 ACT I: The King; leads the Egyptians in praising the victorious war heroes (“Su! del Nilo al sacro lido”)
- 49 ACT I: High Priestess; praying to Ptah
- 50–52 ACT III: Chorus and orchestra; beginning of Act III
- 53 Tracks 50–52 continuously
- 54–56 ACT IV: Radamès, Aida, and chorus; final love duet (“O terra, addio”)
- 57 Tracks 54–56 continuously

Aida Educator Guide
Track List—
Chronological Order

ACT I

- 1 Orchestral overture; Aida theme
- 2–6 Radamès; wishes to be the leader in battle
- 7 Tracks 2–6 continuously
- 48 The King; leads the Egyptians in praising the victorious war heros (“Su! del Nilo al sacro lido”)
- 8–12 ACT I: Egyptian’s cry for war against the Ethiopian enemy
- 13 Tracks 8–12 continuously
- 49 High Priestess; praying to Ptah

ACT II

- 14–17 Amneris and Aida; fighting over their love for Radamès
- 18 Tracks 14–17 continuously
- 40–46 Orchestra; Triumphal March (“Marcia”)
- 47 Tracks 40–46 continuously
- 31–38 Radamès, Ramfis, priests, Aida, Amneris, Amonasro, the King, and chorus; the victorious Egyptian army marches into Thebes (“Gloria all’Egitto”)
- 39 Tracks 32-38 continuously

ACT III

- 50–52 Chorus and orchestra; beginning of Act III
- 53 Tracks 50–52 continuously
- 19–22 Amonasro and Aida; Father/Daughter duet (“Ciel! mio padre”)
- 23 Tracks 19–22 continuously
- 24–29 Radamès, Aida, and Amonasro; the lovers plan for escape with an unexpected twist
- 30 Tracks 24–29 continuously

ACT IV

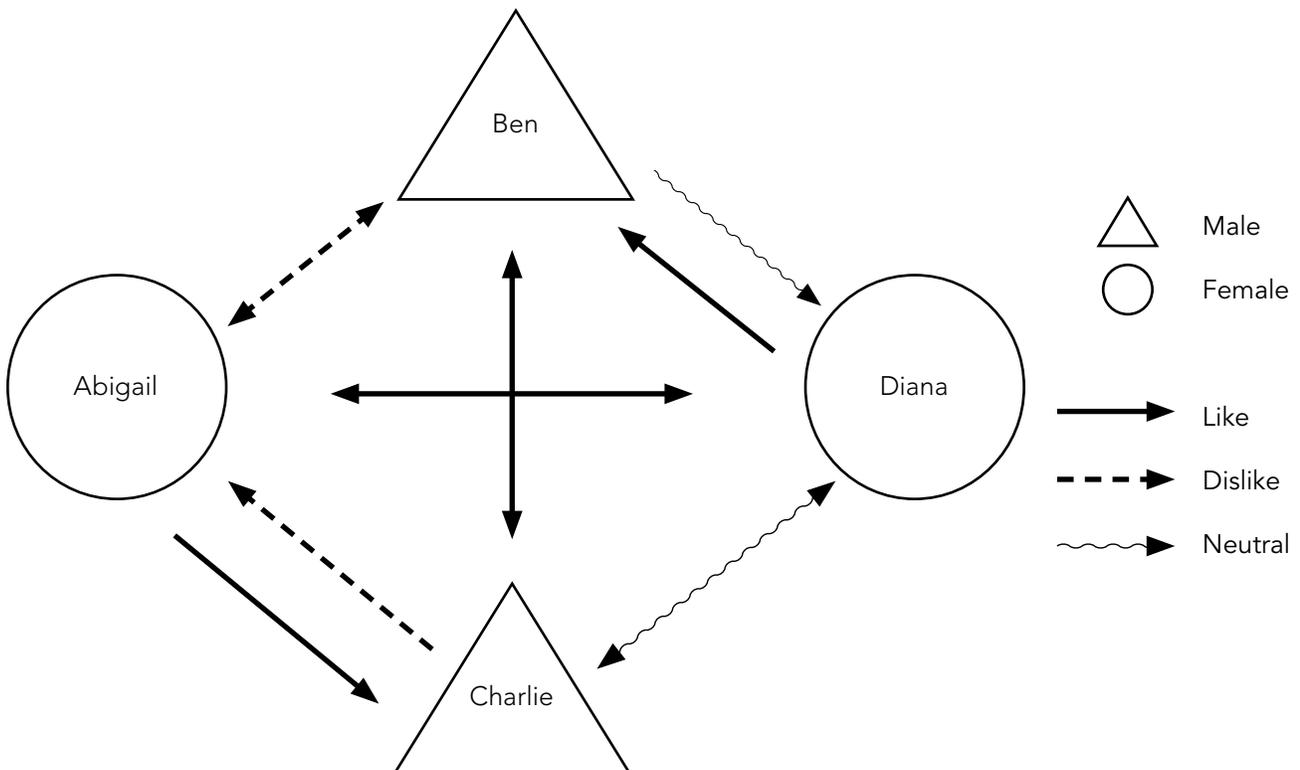
- 54–56 Radamès, Aida, and chorus; final love duet (“O terra, addio”)
- 57 Tracks 54–56 continuously

AIDA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Who Do You Love: Data 2 Ways

	FEELS ABOUT ABIGAIL	FEELS ABOUT BEN	FEELS ABOUT CHARLIE	FEELS ABOUT DIANA
How Abigail...		-	+	+
How Ben...	-		+	~
How Charlie...	-	+		~
How Diana...	+	+	~	



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Who Do You Love: Listening In

Excerpt 1—Act 1, Scene 1

TRACK 1

Orchestral

TRACK 2

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.
Ah! s'io fossi a tale onor prescelto...

My heart delighted in a glorious dream—
today the goddess has chosen the name of the warrior
who will lead the Egyptian forces into battle.
Ah! If only I could be chosen for such an honor!

TRACK 3

AMNERIS: Nè un'altro sogno mai...
più gentil... più soave...
al cuore ti parlò?
Non hai tu in Menfi desideri... speranze?

Has not another dream...
gentler...sweeter...
ever spoken to your heart?
Don't you desire or hope for anything in Memphis?

TRACK 4

RADAMÈS: Io? (Quale inchiesta!
Forse... l'arcano amore
scopri che m'arde in core.)

Me? (What a question!
Perhaps...she has discovered the
secret love burning in my heart.)

TRACK 5

AMNERIS: (Oh! guai se un altro amore ardesse a lui nel core!)

(Oh woe, if another love burns in his heart!)

TRACK 6

RADAMÈS: Dessa!

Her!

TRACK 7

Reprises Tracks 2-6.

Excerpt 2—Act 1, Scene 1

TRACK 8

PRIESTS, SOLDIERS, AND ALL: Guerra!

War!

TRACK 9

AIDA, THEN ALL: Ritorna vincitor!

Return victorious!

TRACK 10

AIDA: Ritorna vincitor! E dal mio labbro uscì l'empia parola!

Return victorious! Such evil words have come from my mouth!

AIDA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Who Do You Love: Listening In (CONTINUED)

TRACK 11

AIDA: L'insana parola, oh Numi, sperdete!
Al seno d'un padre la figlia rendete;
Struggete le squadre dei nostri oppressor! Ah!

Wipe out these crazy words, oh gods!
Return this daughter to her father's embrace;
Destroy the armies of our oppressors! Ah!

TRACK 12

AIDA: Sventurata! Che dissi?
E l'amor mio?
Dunque scordar poss'io questo fervido amore che, oppressa
e schiava, come raggio di sol qui mi beava?

Wretched woman! What have I said?
And what about my love?
Can I, oppressed and enslaved, just forget this burning love
that has been my one delightful ray of sunshine?

TRACK 13

Tracks 8–12 continuously

Excerpt 3—Act II, Scene 1

TRACK 14

AMNERIS: Sì...tu l'ami...
ma l'amo anch'io...
intendi tu?
Son tua rivale...
figlia dei Faraoni.

Yes...you love him...
but I love him too...
do you understand?
I am your rival...
the daughter of the Pharoahs.

TRACK 15

AIDA: Mia rivale!
Ebben sia pure.
Anch'io...son tal...
Ah! che dissi mai?

My rival!
Then so be it.
I too...I am...
Ah! What have I said?

TRACK 16

AIDA: Pietà! Perdono! Ah! Pietà ti prenda del mio dolor...
È vero. Io l'amo d'immenso amor.
Tu sei felice. Tu sei possente. Io vivo solo per questo amor!

Pity! Pardon! Ah! Take pity on my sorrow.
It's true. I love him with a mighty love.
You are happy. You are powerful. I live only for this love!

TRACK 17

AMNERIS: Trema, vil schiava!
Spezza il tuo core.
Segnar tua morte può quest'amore.
Del tuo destino arbitra io sono,
d'odio e vendetta le furie ho in cor.

Tremble, disgusting slave!
Your heart is breaking.
This love can mean your death.
I control your destiny.
My angry heart is full of hate and vengeance.

TRACK 18

Tracks 14–17 continuously

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Who Do You Love: Listening In (CONTINUED)

Excerpt 4—Act III

TRACK 19

AMONASRO: In armi ora si desta il popol nostro;
tutto pronto è già.
Vittoria avrem.
Solo a saper mi resta
qual sentier il nemico seguirà.

AIDA: Chi scoprirlo potria? Chi mai?

AMONASRO: Tu stessa!

AIDA: Io?

Our people are now armed.
Everything is ready.
We will be victorious.
All that remains is for me to find out
which trail the enemy will follow.

Who can find that out? Who?

You yourself!

Me?

TRACK 20

AMONASRO: Radamès so che qui attendi.
Ei t'ama. Ei conduce gli Egizii.
Intendi?

AIDA: Orrore! Che mi consigli tu?
No! No! Giammai!

I know that you are waiting here for Radamès.
He loves you. He commands the Egyptians.
Do you understand?

Horrors! What are you asking me?
No! No! Never!

TRACK 21

AMONASRO: Non sei mia figlia.
Dei Faraoni tu sei la schiava!

You're not my daughter.
You're the slave of the Pharaohs!

TRACK 22

AIDA: Ah, pietà!
Padre! a costoro schiava io non sono.
Non maledirmi. Non imprecarmi.
Ancor tua figlia potrai chiamarmi.
Della mia patria degna sarò.

Ah, have pity!
Father, I am not slave to those people.
Don't curse me! Don't vilify me!
You will still be able to call me your daughter.
I will be worthy of my homeland.

TRACK 23

Tracks 19–22 continuously

Excerpt 5 (optional)—Act III

TRACK 24

AIDA AND RADAMÈS: Vieni meco. Insieme fuggiamo
questa terra di dolor.
Vieni meco. T'amo!
A noi duce fia l'amor.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Who Do You Love: Listening In (CONTINUED)

TRACK 25

AIDA: Ma dimmi—per qual via
eviterem le schiere
degli armati?

Come with me. Together we'll escape
this land of sorrow.

Come with me. I love you!
Love will be our guide.

TRACK 26

RADAMÈS: Il sentier scelto dai nostri
a piombar sul nemico fia deserto fino a domani.

TRACK 27

AIDA: E quel sentier?

But tell me—by which road
will we evade the battalions
of soldiers?

TRACK 28

RADAMÈS: Le gole di Nápata...

The trail that our army will follow to pounce on the enemy will
be deserted until tomorrow.

TRACK 29

AMONASRO: Di Nápata le gole! Ivi saranno i miei.

RADAMÈS: Oh! chi ci ascolta?...

Which trail?

AMONASRO: D'Aida il padre—e degli Etiopi il Re.

RADAMÈS: Tu! Amonasro! Tu! Il Re?
Numi! Che dissì? No! Non è ver!
No!...sogno...delirio è questo...

The Napata gorges.

AIDA: Ah no! ti calma. Ascoltami.
All'amor mio t'affida.

By the Napata gorges! My men will be there!

AMONASRO: A te l'amor d'Aida un soglio innalzerà.

Oh! Who's listening there?

RADAMÈS: Io son disonorato! Per te tradii la patria!

Aida's father—and the King of Ethiopia!

TRACK 30

Tracks 24-29 continuously

You! Amonasro! You! The King?
Gods! What have I said? No! It isn't true!
No! I'm dreaming! This can't be true!

Ah, no, calm yourself. Listen to me.
Trust in my love.

Aida's love will raise you to a throne.

I am dishonored! I have betrayed my homeland for you!

AIDA

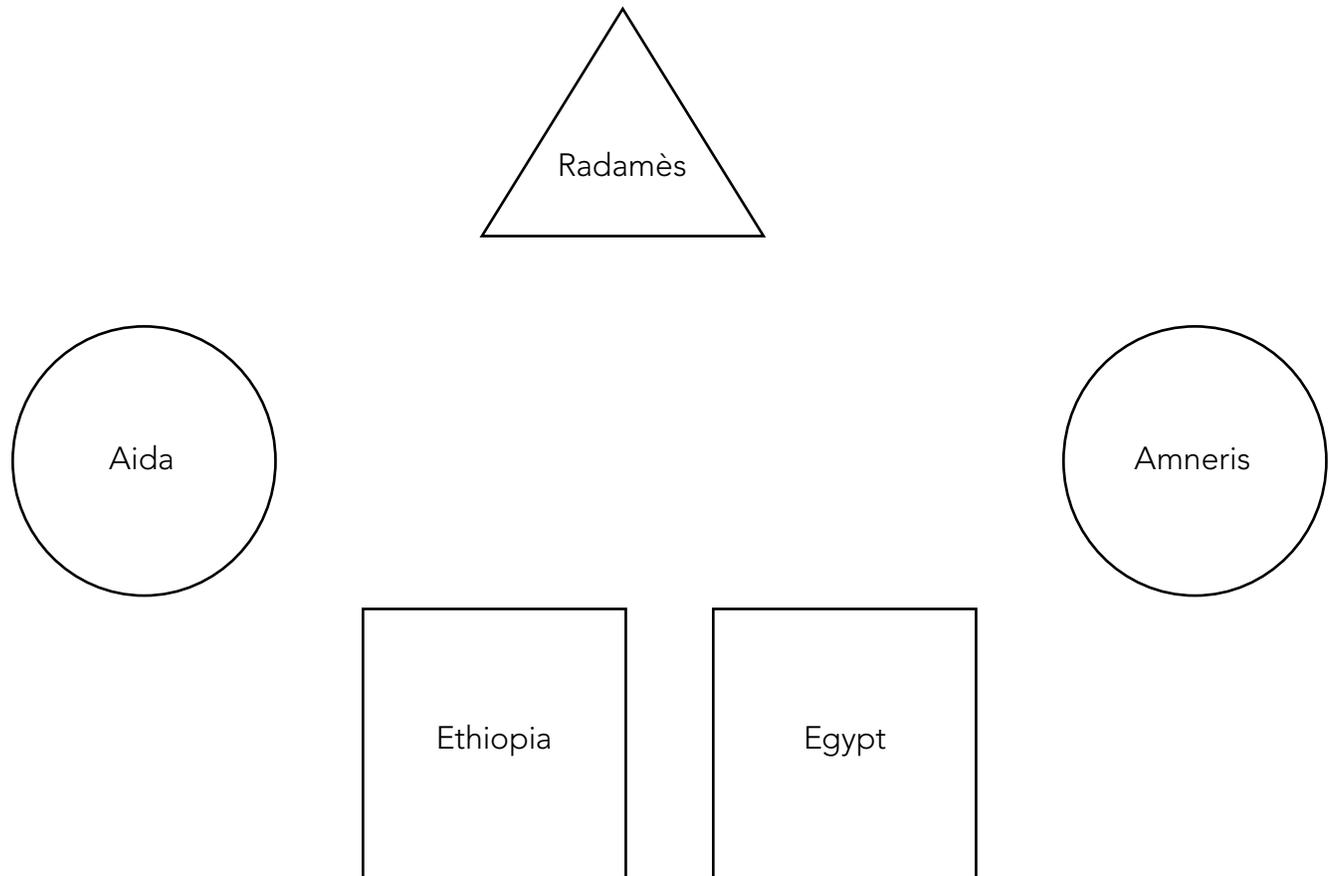
CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Who Do You Love: Sociological Observations

	Radamès	Amneris	Aida	Amonasro	Egypt	Ethiopia
How Radamès feels about...						
How Amneris feels about...						
How Aida feels about...						

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Who Do You Love: Sociogram Construction Site



-  Male
-  Female
-  Places

-  Like
-  Dislike
-  Neutral

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

In the Spotlight

TRACK 31

RADAMÈS: (Il dolor che in quel volto favella
al mio sguardo la rende più bella;
ogni stilla del pianto adorato
nel mio petto ravviva l'ardor.)

THE KING: Or che fausti ne arridon gli eventi a costoro
mostriamci clement;
la pietà sale ai Numi gradita,
e rafferma dei prenci il poter.

AMNERIS: (Quali sguardi sovr'essa ha rivolti!
Di qual fiamma balenano i volti!
Ed io sola, avvilita, reietta?
La vendetta mi rugge nel cor.)

AMONASRO, SLAVES, AND PRISONERS:
Tua pietà, tua clemenza imploriamo!
Ah! Pietà, pietà.

AIDA: Tua pietà imploro.
Oggi noi siam percossi dal fato,
doman voi potria il fato colpir.

THE PEOPLE ASSEMBLED: Sacerdoti, gli sdegni placate!
L'umil prece dei vinti ascoltate.
Pietà!

RAMFIS AND PRIESTS: Si compisca dei Numi il voler!
Struggi, o Re, queste ciurme feroci.
Fur dai Numi votati alla morte.
Si compisca dei Numi il voler!

TRACK 32

THE KING AND THE PEOPLE ASSEMBLED: Gloria all'Egitto e ad Iside
che il sacro suol difende.
S'intrecci il loto al lauro sul crin del vincitor.

SLAVES AND PRISONERS: Gloria al clemente Egizio
che i nostri ceppi ha sciolto,
che ci ridona ai liberi
solchi del patrio suol.

TRACK 33

RAMFIS AND PRIESTS: Inni leviamo ad Iside,
che il sacro suol difende!
Pregiam che i fati arridano
fausti alla patria ognor.

(The sorrow that shows in her face
makes her lovelier in my eyes.
Every adored tear she cries
renews the passion in my heart.)

Since happy events now favor us,
let us show mercy to these people.
Mercy pleases the gods
and confirms the power of princes.

(How he looks at her!
What fire burns in their faces!
And I'm alone, reviled, rejected?
Vengeance rages in my heart.)

We plead for your mercy and your compassion!
Oh, have mercy! Have mercy!

I plead for your mercy.
Today we suffer the blows of fate;
tomorrow fate may strike you.

Priests, calm your anger!
Listen to the humble prayers of the conquered.
Take pity!

Let the gods' will be done!
Destroy, o King, this fierce gang.
They were chosen for death by the gods.
Let the gods' will be done!

Glory to Egypt and to [the goddess] Isis,
who defends the sacred land.
Braid a crown lotus and laurel for the victor's head.

Glory to merciful Egypt,
which has broken our chains,
which sends us back to the open fields
of our native soil.

Let's raise hymns to Isis,
who defends the sacred land!
Let us pray that the fates
always smile upon our homeland.

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

In the Spotlight (CONTINUED)

TRACK 34

AIDA: (Qual speme omai più restami?
A lui la gloria, il trono...
A me l'oblio...le lacrime
d'un disperato amor.)

RADAMÈS: (D'avverso Nume il folgore,
sul capo mio discende.
Ah no! d'Egitto il soglio
non val d'Aida il cor.)

AMNERIS: (Dall'inatteso giubilo inebriata io sono;
tutti in un dì si compiono
i sogni del mio cor.)

RAMFIS: Preghiam che i fati arridano
fausti alla patria ognor.

THE PEOPLE ASSEMBLED: Gloria all'Egitto e ad Iside!

(What hope remains for me now?
For him, glory and the throne...
For me, oblivion and the tears
of a hopeless love.)

(The blows of an angry god
strike down upon my head.
Ah! No! The throne of Egypt
is not worth Aida's heart.)

(I am drunk with unexpected joy;
all the dreams of my heart
are fulfilled in one day.)

Let us pray that the fates always
smile upon our homeland.

Glory to Egypt and to Isis!

TRACK 35

AMONASRO: Fa cor: della tua patria
i lieti eventi aspetta;
per noi della vendetta
già prossimo è l'albor.

Take heart! Await happy events
for your homeland.
The dawn of our vengeance
is already near.

TRACK 36

RADAMÈS: (Qual inattesa folgore sul capo mio discende.
Ah no! d'Egitto il trono non val d'Aida il cor;
d'Egitto il suol non val d'Aida il cor;
d'Egitto il soglio non val d'Aida il cor.)

AMNERIS: (Tutti in un dì si compiono le gioie del mio cor.
Ah! dall'inatteso giubilo inebriata io sono.)

AMONASRO: Fa cor: della tua patria i lieti eventi aspetta;
per noi della vendetta già prossimo è l'albor.

RAMFIS AND PRIESTS: Inni leviamo ad Iside
che il sacro suol difende!
Preghiam che i fati arridano
fausti alla patria ognor.

AIDA: (A me l'oblio...le lacrime!
Ah! qual speme omai più restami?
A lui la gloria e il trono...
A me l'oblio... le lacrime di disperato amor.)

(What unexpected blows strike down upon my head!
Ah! No! The throne of Egypt is not worth Aida's heart.
The land of Egypt is not worth Aida's heart.
The kingdom of Egypt is not worth Aida's heart.)

(All the joys of my heart are fulfilled in one day.
Ah! I am drunk with unexpected joy!)

Take heart! Await happy events for your homeland.
The dawn of our vengeance is already near.

Let's raise hymns to Isis,
who defends the sacred land!
Let us pray that the fates always
smile upon our homeland.

(For me, oblivion, tears!
Ah, what hope remains for me now?
For him, glory and the throne.
For me, oblivion and the tears of a hopeless love.)

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

In the Spotlight (CONTINUED)

TRACK 37

THE PEOPLE ASSEMBLED: Gloria all'Egitto e ad Iside
che il sacro suol difende!
S'intrecci il loto al lauro
sul crin del vincitor!

SLAVES AND PRISONERS: Gloria al clemente Egizio
che i nostri ceppi ha sciolto,
che ci ridona ai liberi
solchi del patrio suol!

Glory to Egypt and to [the goddess] Isis,
who defends the sacred land!
Braid a crown lotus and laurel
for the victor's head!

Glory to merciful Egypt,
which has broken our chains,
which sends us back to
the open fields of our native soil.

TRACK 38

Orchestral

TRACK 39

Tracks 31–38 continuously

RESOURCE PAGE FOR MUSICAL HIGHLIGHT

East Meets West

TRACK 48

MINISTERS AND OFFICERS: Su! del Nilo al sacro lido
sian barriera i nostri petti;
non echeggi che un sol grido:
guerra e morte allo stranier!

Let's go! Let us become like a fortress around the sacred
banks of the Nile!
Only a single cry will echo:
war and death to the foreigner!

TRACK 49

PRIESTESS: Immenso Fthà, del mondo spirito animator,
noi ti invochiamo!

Great Ptah, spirit who animates the world,
we call upon you!

TRACKS 50 AND 51

Orchestral

TRACK 52

CHORUS: 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.

O you who are the immortal
mother and wife of Osiris,
goddess who made
chaste human hearts beat,
come to our aid,
merciful mother of eternal love.

TRACK 53

Tracks 50–52 continuously

TRACK 54

AIDA AND RADAMÈS: O terra, addio; addio valle di pianti.
Sogno di gaudio che in dolor svanì.
A noi si schiude il ciel e l'alme erranti
volano al raggi dell'eterno dì.

O earth, farewell. Farewell valley of sorrows,
dream of joy that faded into misery.
Heaven is opening for us, and
wayward souls fly into the brightness of eternal day.

TRACK 55

PRIESTS: Immenso Fthà, noi t'invochiamo!

Great Ptah, we call upon you!

TRACK 56

AIDA AND RADAMÈS: Si schiude il ciel.
O terra, addio;
addio valle di pianti.

Heaven opens.
O earth, farewell.
Farewell, valley of sorrows.

TRACK 57

Tracks 54–56 continuously

AIDA

DECEMBER 15, 2012

Performance Activity: Secrets of the Stage

Name

Class

Teacher

During the course of *Aida*, the vast stage of the Metropolitan Opera becomes an ancient Egyptian palace, a vast temple, a plaza in the middle of a city, the site of a riverbank shrine, and even a tomb deep underground. All of these rise and descend from secret spaces above and below the visible stage, so you can't see them all at once. But watch carefully and you can figure out how this amazing set-machine works.

To figure out the secrets of the sets, notice how big or small the performers are compared to objects on stage. Notice when sets rise and descend. Then, during the last act, use this page to crack the code. You'll see:

- the outside of a temple, decorated with two enormous figures—statues of long-bearded pharaohs
- the inside of the temple, and
- a tomb buried beneath the temple.

Use the grids below to sketch the sets. Pay close attention to:

- differences in height and width
- distances between objects and people
- movement upward and downward

By the time you're done, you'll have figured out the secrets of the amazing Metropolitan Opera stage.

Aida: My Highs & Lows

DECEMBER 15, 2012

CONDUCTED BY FABIO LUISI

REVIEWED BY _____

THE STARS	STAR POWER	MY COMMENTS
LIUDMYLA MONASTYRSKA AS AIDA	* * * * *	
ROBERTO ALAGNA AS RADAMÈS	* * * * *	
OLGA BORODINA AS AMNERIS	* * * * *	
GEORGE GAGNIDZE AS AMONASRO	* * * * *	
ŠTEFAN KOCÁN AS RAMFIS	* * * * *	

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
RADAMÈS LEARNS THAT ISIS HAS CHOSEN A LEADER MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
AMNERIS HINTS AT HER OWN PURPOSES MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
AIDA APPEARS, COMPLETING THE THREESOME MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE KING ANNOUNCES THE BATTLE WITH ETHIOPIA MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
AIDA RECOGNIZES HER DIFFICULT POSITION MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
PRAYER AND DANCE OF THE PRIESTESSES MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
AMNERIS TRICKS AIDA INTO REVEALING HER SECRET MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5

Aida: My Highs & Lows

(CONTINUED)

THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE	ACTION	MUSIC	SET DESIGN/STAGING
THE VICTORIOUS ARMY RETURNS MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
WISHES FOR MERCY...AND VENGEANCE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
AMONASRO CONFRONTS AIDA MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
AIDA'S FATEFUL RENDEZVOUS WITH RADAMÈS MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
AMNERIS PLEADS FOR MERCY TOWARD RADAMÈS MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
RADAMÈS REFUSES TO REPENT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE PRIESTS PASS JUDGMENT MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
RADAMÈS FINDS A SURPRISE IN HIS TOMB MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
THE FATES OF RADAMÈS, AIDA AND AMNERIS ARE SEALED MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5