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Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, W.C.2.
One of the wiser causes championed by Bernard Shaw was the Jaeger reformed clothing movement. The photograph shows him as a young man wearing a stockinette jacket. Tight-fitting pants of the same material reached to the shavian ankles. He usually wore this outfit for his daily stroll between Bloomsbury and the Marble Arch.

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**Tuesday, 8th July, 1958**

The 296th performance* at the Royal Opera House of

**AIDA**

**OPERA IN FOUR ACTS**

Scenario by F. A. F. Muriette
Words by C. du Locle translated into Italian verse by Antonio Ghiliani
Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Anita by Giuseppe Verdi

(Proprietor: G. Ricordi & Co.)

Scenery and costumes by Salvatore Fiume
Choreography by Margherita Wallmann
Lighting by John Sullivan

CONDUCTOR — RAFAEL KUBELIK

PRODUCER — MARGHERITA WALLMANN

THE COVENT GARDEN OPERA CHURCH
Choir Master — DOUGLAS ROBSON

THE COVENT GARDEN ORCHESTRA
Leader — CHARLES TAYLOR

GIUSEPPE VERDI, 1813-1901

*AIDA* was commissioned by Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt for the Italian Theatre at Cairo. It was first performed there on 24th December, 1871, but as is sometimes stated for the opening of the Suez Canal that was in November, 1869, with Antonietta Anastasia (orozzo Coin As Aida, Eleonora Grossi as Amneris, Pietro Morgari as Radames, Francesco Steller as Amonasro, Paolo Modesti as Ramfis, and Tenno Costa as the King; Giovanni Botti was the conductor. The opera was first performed at the Scala, Milan on the following February with Stolz, Waldmann, Faccelli, Pindolfini, Maini, conductor Verdi. The first performance in England was at Covent Garden on 22nd June, 1876, with Adelina Patti in the title role, Mme. Ginodil as Amneris, Ernest Nicolini as Radames, Francesco Graziani as Amonasro. Sir Capponi as Ramfis. Enrico De Vignani was the conductor. The performance in English was at Her Majesty's Theatre on 19th February, 1881, with Myra Hak in J. Yorke, Joseph Maas, Mr. Ludwig and Mr. Conly, conductor Alberto Rondinelli. The opera has been one of the most popular in the Covent Garden repertory since it was first performed. Famous Aidas in this house have included Lilian Nordica, Fiona Eames, Emily Dessain, Elisabeth Rethberg, Dorothea Gramm, Evita Turini, Gina Liguiz and Maria Callas. Radames has been sung by Jean de Reszke, Francesco Tamagno, Enrico Caruso, Giovanni Zenatello, Giovanni Martinelli, Aureliano Pertile, Giacinto Lauri-Volpi, and Beniamino Gigli; and Amneris by Louise Homer, Louise Kochby, Lunn, Sagram Ouniga, Irene Minnelli Ciancone, Gertrude Wettigroen and Ebe Stignani.

* (amended figure after recent researches)
CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

AIDA, the High Priest .... MICHAEL LANGDON
RAMEIS, Captain of the Guards ... CARLOS GUICHANDUT
Amneris, the King's daughter ...... BLANCHE THEBOM
AIDA, the slave of Amneris ...... LEONTYNE PRICE
The King .... JOSEPH ROULEAU
A Messenger ...... DAVID ALLEN
A Priestess ...... JOAN CARLYLE
Amonasro, King of Ethiopia ...... JOHN SHAW
Sole Dancers ...... CLARE MILLAR, ROBERT DE WARREN

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

HISTORICAL NOTE

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

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

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

The actual story of the opera is pure fiction and the precise historical background against which the story is told is a matter of conjecture. The King is never mentioned by name, and the historical events are not easily identified. It has been assumed however by specialists that the period was that of the Nineteenth Dynasty, and the King was Ramses III, who reigned about 1250 B.C.

AIDA

ACT I

SCENE I: BEFORE THE PALACE OF THE PHARAOH AT MEMPHIS.

Radames, a young captain of the Egyptian guard, hears from the High Priest, Ramfis, that the Ethiopians are threatening the Nile Valley, and that the goddess Isis will name a new leader for the armies of Egypt. Radames hopes that he may be chosen, so that he may win the hand of Aida, the Ethiopian slave girl of Amneris, the King’s daughter. Left alone he expresses his wishes in the aria Celeste Aida. Amneris, who herself is in love with Radames, interrupts his reverie and questions him about his feelings. They are soon joined by Aida, who is the daughter of Amonasro, King of Ethiopia. Her identity is not known to her captives. Amonasro forgives friendship with Aida, but is really intensely jealous of her.

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

INTERVAL

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

ACT II

SCENE I: THE APARTMENTS OF AMNERIS.

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

SCENE II: THE GATES OF THE CITY.

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

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

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INTERVAL

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ACT III

THE BANKS OF THE NILE NEAR THE TEMPLE OF ISIS.

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

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

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

INTERVAL

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

ACT IV

INSIDE THE TEMPLE OF VULCAN.

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

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

H.D.R.
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OPERA

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

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