





Giuseppe Verdi

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Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

Nabucco

Dramma lirico in four parts

Libretto by Temistocle Solera after Cortesi's ballet *Nabuccodonosor* and
Anicet-Bourgeios' and Cornu's play *Nabuchodonosor*

English translation by Norman Tucker and Tom Hammond

Nabucodonosor (Nabucco), King of Babylon.....Alan Opie *baritone*
Ismael, nephew of Sedecia, King of Jerusalem.....Leonardo Capalbo *tenor*
Zachariah, High Priest of the Hebrews.....Alastair Miles *bass*
Abigail, slave, presumed to be Nabucodonosor's eldest daughter Susan Patterson *soprano*
Fenena, daughter of Nabucodonosor.....Jane Irwin *mezzo-soprano*
High Priest of Baal.....Dean Robinson *bass*
Abdullah, elderly officer of the King of Babylon Paul Wade *tenor*
Anna, Zachariah's sister Camilla Roberts *soprano*

Opera North Orchestra and Chorus

Charles Kraus chorus master

David Parry

Martin Pickard assistant conductor



COMPACT DISC ONE

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[12] 'Profaner! You shall not enter!' <i>Zachariah, Nabucco</i>	1:11	[p. 78]
[13] 'Tremble, you madmen' <i>Nabucco, Fenena, Anna, Ismael, Zachariah, Hebrews, Levites, Abigail</i>	3:42	[p. 78]
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[25] 'But what means this disturbance?' <i>Fenena, Ismael, Zachariah, Levites, Abdullah, High Priest, Abigail, Nabucco</i>	1:45	[p. 83]
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[28] 'Who has stolen my crown and sceptre?' <i>Nabucco, Zachariah, Abigail</i>	3:06	[p. 85]
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COMPACT DISC TWO		
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Chorus of Hebrew Slaves

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Fenena, Ismael, Nabucco, Zachariah, Chorus 2:40 [p. 93]

[18] 'My strength... is failing... my death is near...'
Abigail, Hebrews, Zachariah 3:30 [p. 94]

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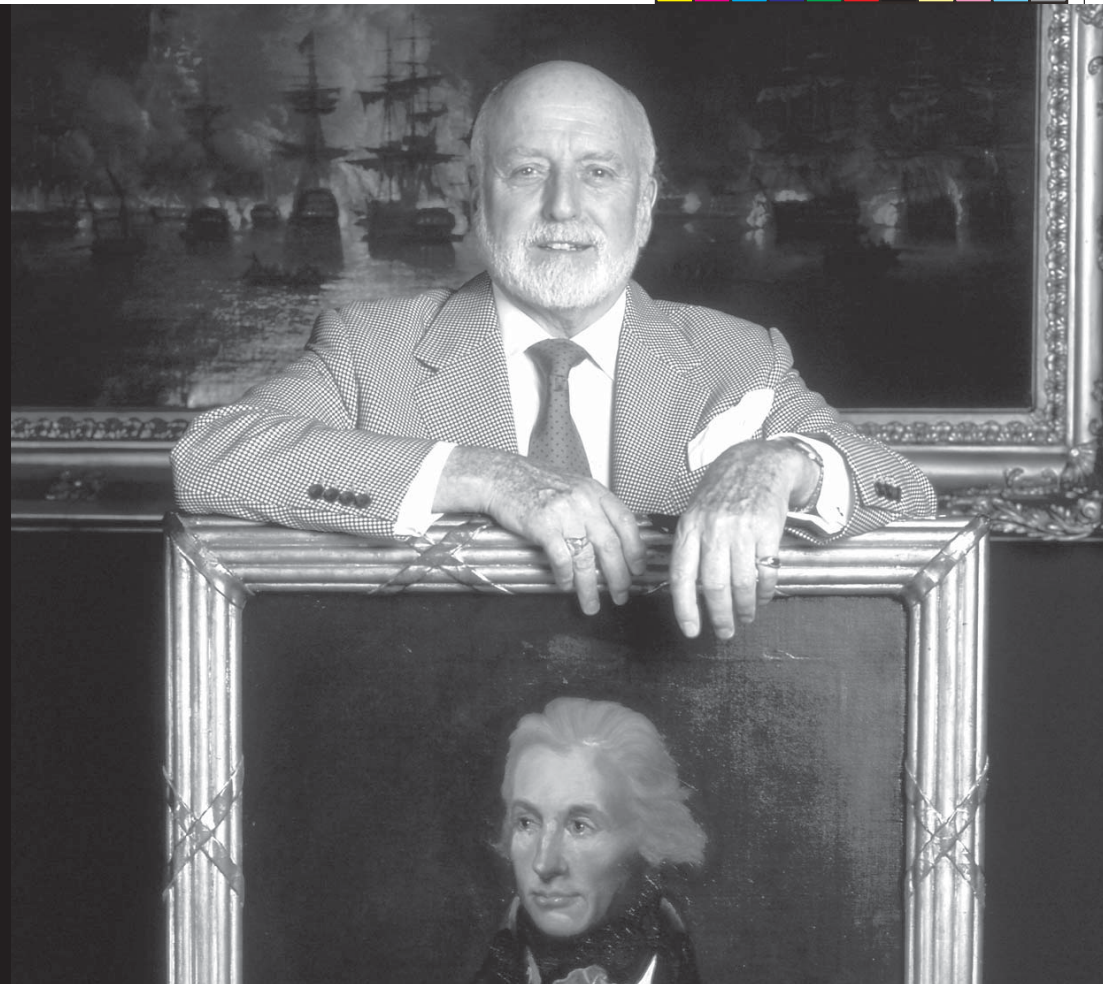


If you only know the famous 'Chorus of Hebrew Slaves' from Verdi's first big success, *Nabucco*, then you are in for a treat with this complete recording by Opera North. The English translation by Norman Tucker and Tom Hammond, originally written for John Moody's Welsh National Opera production in 1952, has remained hugely popular ever since. I hope you enjoy listening to it as much as I do.

Peter Moores

Sir Peter Moores, CBE, DL
November 2006

Sir Peter Moores with a portrait of Admiral Lord Nelson
by Lemuel Francis Abbott, acquired for Compton Verney
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The New Voice of Italian Opera

Nabucco, first performed at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan, on 9 March 1842, was a crucial event in the composer's career, indeed in his life story. Although two Verdi operas precede it – the first (*Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*) a moderate success, the second (*Un giorno di regno*) a calamitous failure – the composer stressed in recollections thirty years later how *Nabucco* was the 'true beginning': the moment in which he found his true voice and began to communicate his unique vision of Italian opera. Of course, quite a number of these later recollections – produced when Verdi was an international figure, and disseminated widely by the journalists who now gathered around him and clamoured for interviews – were geared towards very definite ends. It was important to Verdi's projection of himself in later life that he was seen as a 'self-man man' – that he was thought to have emerged into the limelight after a period of relative obscurity and intense personal struggle. What is more, he was also keen to capitalise on the iconic status that the most famous number in *Nabucco*, the chorus of Hebrew Slaves 'Va, pensiero' ('Speed your journey'), was

beginning to acquire in a newly united Italy eagerly searching out national monuments and other symbolic material. To achieve this, his stories surrounding *Nabucco* constantly stressed a compositional crisis after *Un giorno di regno*, a period in which he refused all offers of new work; but then, in the depths of winter, a libretto is forced on him and the words of 'Va, pensiero' almost magically appear before his eyes. Eventually, thoughts of how the chorus might sound lead him back to composition; the rest, as they say, is history.

The reality was, inevitably, not quite so tidy. After *Un giorno di regno* there was indeed something of a gap in Verdi's compositional career, but it was a gap filled in part by revivals of *Oberto* – revivals that Verdi enthusiastically encouraged by supplying some important new pieces for prominent soloists. What's more, when *Nabucco* finally arrived, there is no evidence that 'Va, pensiero' was a particularly important piece for early audiences, still less that it was a musical focal point so far as Verdi was concerned. On the other hand, there is no arguing with the fact that *Nabucco* was in fact a crucial moment. In professional terms,

it placed Verdi firmly on a new rung of the ladder, in particular when it was revived at La Scala in the autumn season of 1842 and ran for a record fifty-seven performances. Never again would he be uncertain about where the next commission might come from, particularly when, as happened very rapidly, the opera began to circulate around Italy, usually with a success comparable to that in Milan. And so, even though we should remain highly suspicious of what *Nabucco* became in the later nineteenth century, there still lingers an important question: what was it about the opera that made audiences in 1842 sit up and listen? What was new and distinctive about Verdi's musical personality?

One answer comes in the very first number, which takes place inside the temple of Solomon. The Babylonian army has reached Jerusalem and is at the gates of the temple. The Israelites lament their fate in an opening chorus, but the prophet Zachariah rallies them, injecting them with a new, warlike spirit. Although Italian opera of the period almost always started with an opening chorus, this one is like few others before it. Previous generations had seen plenty of chattering courtiers and celebratory vassals, but here we get a sense of an altogether grander canvas.

The chorus draws much of its effect from the alternation of contrasting groups: a terrified populace, a huddle of praying Levites, another of supplicant virgins; and all are presented with an immediacy and directness that must have seemed violent at the time. What is equally important, though, is that Zachariah's response, although set in the usual form of a two-movement aria, is more like a dynamic dialogue with the masses surrounding him. In both movements, the chorus make decisive interventions into his solo, invading Zachariah's space, taking over his melody and making it part of their expressive world.

Later in the opera, this sense of a new choral 'voice' is built upon, not least in numbers such as the 'Coro e Profezia' ('Chorus and Prophecy') in Part III, which show how Verdi could bind the usual choral and solistic elements into compelling scenic units. The choral writing of 'Va, pensiero' that begins the scene is highly original, and seems again to command a new status for the masses (Rossini presciently called it 'not so much a chorus as a grand aria for sopranos, altos, tenors and basses'); but its gentle, nostalgic vein is then violently countered by the energetic prophesy from Zachariah that follows, in particular by its closing cabaletta, in which a violent end is



promised for the enemy forces. But what is most important here is that the two halves of the scene are intimately linked together by shared rhythmic and melodic ideas: they are, in that sense, part of the same musical message, each gaining strength by its proximity to the other. Again, the chorus seems to become part of the expressive centre of the opera.

However, the novelty of *Nabucco* cannot be restricted to numbers in which the chorus feature, and this no matter how impressive such moments are. No composer of this period could have been so strikingly successful as Verdi without also writing in important new ways for the solo voice, which remained at the core of how opera communicated to its audiences. That Verdi was, from the start of his career, also markedly original in this respect has tended to be obscured by concentration on the choral elements, and is worth some investigation. A good case in point in his novel treatment of the character of Abigail, a role that was seemingly created for the German soprano Sophie Loewe, but was eventually performed at the premiere by Giuseppina Strepponi, soon after to become the composer's lifetime companion. Inspired mostly by Loewe's particular skills (Strepponi appeared on the

scene late in day), Verdi invented in Abigail a new type of Italian dramatic soprano.

The accompanied recitative that introduces Abigail in Part I immediately fixes her unusual vocal character, which requires power in the lower register, agility above the staff and a forceful dramatic presence throughout. In the context of the Donizettian norms current in 1842, in which sopranos tended to be placed in the 'wilting female' category, and were above all prized for their delicate lyricism and flights of extravagant coloratura (Lucia di Lammermoor is the classic case), these were unusual features. Even more important, though, is the full-scale aria Verdi wrote for Abigail at the start of Part II. In its formal exterior, this number seems very much along Donizettian lines, with a conventional multi-movement format moving from lyrical slow movement to more energetic cabaletta. But internally there are decisive changes. After an intense recitative Abigail's thoughts turn to love in the slow movement, 'Anch'io dischiuso un giorno' ('The sweet fire of love's enchantment'). This is, admittedly, highly ornamental, with each two-bar phrase rounded off by a vocal flourish; but the ornaments are, typically for Verdi, strictly contained, giving their proliferation at the climax a compelling

energy and sense of forward movement. There is, in other words, none of that Donizettian tendency to drift into ever looser rhythmic periods as the aria progresses and gets more florid. The cabaletta, 'Salgo già del trono aurato' ('On the golden throne of Assyria'), is even more radical in this respect. It returns to the forceful tone of the recitative and, now in a far more dynamic context, again succeeds in controlling the ornamental side of the music. Far from 'dissolving' into vocal virtuosity at the end, the aria, in other words, continues to subordinate the ornamentation, containing it within strictly controlled periods. Such examples, which could easily be multiplied, demonstrate at least a part of how that energy so typical of Verdi's early operas is created: through a tightening of form coupled with an intensification of expressive content.

The changes in vocal character between Abigail and Lucia could also be found in the other vocal principals of *Nabucco*: in all voice ranges robustness and sheer volume began to make inroads into vocal flexibility, the new immediacy and 'realism' in acting style going hand-in-hand with a tendency to indulge ever more intensely in vehement declamation rather than seamless *bel canto*. We can see this most obviously in the emergence of the

'Verdian' baritone, of which Nabucco is the first example. Nabucco is, from his first entrance, characterized by high tessitura, a tendency towards intense declamation, and a relative absence of ornamental writing: a very different animal from the mellifluous 'basso cantante' (singing bass) of twenty years earlier. The finale of Part II is probably Nabucco's greatest moment in this respect. The slow movement of the finale, 'S'appressan gl'istanti' ('The moment approaches'), gains its effect not from individual characterization (each of the principals sings the same melody) but from an inexorable increase in textural complexity and sonic power. But then Nabucco faces the crowd and declares himself not only their king but their God. A thunderbolt strikes him down for this blasphemy and the crowd murmurs in shocked response. Italian operatic convention would then have suggested a fast concluding movement; but instead Verdi decided on a mad scene for Nabucco. Such scenes had, in the past, typically been the domain of sopranos (Lucia is again the classic case); but the new emotional range of the male voice is harnessed by Verdi. In a marvellous scene, the stricken king distractedly moves between two very different modes: on the one hand, furious declamation as he rails at his fate;



but then, in a sudden and repeated transition, a much gentler side comes forward as he questions his vulnerability and, finally, faints away.

A month after Verdi's death in 1901, before which he was universally thought of as the greatest living Italian, a solemn procession through Milan accompanied by hundreds of thousands of mourners assisted the transfer of his remains to their final resting place in the Casa di Riposo, the home for retired musicians that he had built as a philanthropic monument in old age. The procession was sent on its way by the orchestra and chorus of La Scala, who encouraged the crowd into a rendition of 'Va, pensiero'. The fact that this chorus from *Nabucco*, written some sixty years earlier, could express contemporary Italians' feelings for their departed hero demonstrated the extent to which Verdi's music had been assimilated into the national consciousness. But that all happened a hundred years ago. *Nabucco* should not be forever wrapped in these nostalgic moments, in spite of the fact that the gentle contours of 'Va, pensiero' will always encourage such attitudes. There are many other striking features of the opera, many other ways in which it announces the emergence of a vital new presence on the

Italian operatic scene: this was a voice that would develop in remarkable ways over the next forty years, but that would always retain something of the energy and force which *Nabucco* so insistently proclaims.

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Synopsis

COMPACT DISC ONE

1 Overture

Part I: Jerusalem

Inside the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem

2 – 6 The priests and people of Jerusalem are lamenting the conquest of their country by the Babylonian armies, led by Nabucco and his supposed elder daughter, Abigail. The Jews have captured Nabucco's other daughter, Fenena, and kept her as a hostage.

7 When Ismael and Fenena are left alone in the temple we learn that they are in love.

8 Abigail enters, followed by Babylonian soldiers disguised as Hebrews. 9 – 11 Abigail had also fallen in love with Ismael during his captivity in Babylon, and now taunts him with her victory. Zachariah rushes in, 12 – 13

and Nabucco rides to the doors of the temple. 14 Zachariah threatens to kill Fenena, but she is saved by Ismael. 15 Nabucco immediately orders the destruction of the Temple.

Part II: The Blasphemy

The Royal Apartments in Babylon

16 – 17 Abigail, tormented by her unrequited love for Ismael, discovers that she is the daughter of slaves. 18 The High Priest of Baal arrives with news that Fenena has freed the Israelites. He says he has already begun to spread the rumour that Nabucco has been killed in battle, 19 and Abigail resolves to assume power herself.

A room in the palace

20 – 23 Ismael is cursed by the Jews for his betrayal of their cause.

24 – 26 Abigail is declared queen and is about to crown herself, when Nabucco appears and takes the crown from her. 27 Nabucco turns to the crowd and declares himself not only King, but God. There is a flash of lightning and the crown is torn from his head by a supernatural force. 28 Nabucco seems to be mad. Abigail picks up the crown and places it on her own head.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Part III: The Prophecy

In the Hanging Gardens of Babylon

1 The victorious Abigail has been crowned Queen of Assyria. 2 Nabucco is led in and 3 Abigail dupes him into signing a decree, condemning all Jews to death. 4 – 5 Too late, he realises that he has been tricked and has condemned his own daughter to death. 6 He pleads in vain for Fenena's life.

The banks of the Euphrates

7 The Hebrew slaves lament their captivity in a chorus full of nostalgic yearning for their fatherland. 8 – 9 Zachariah, the High Priest, prophesies the downfall of Babylon.

Part IV: The Broken Idol

The royal apartments

10 Nabucco, a prisoner in his own palace, hears a funeral march and sees his daughter Fenena led to her execution. 11 He prays to Jehovah, the God of Israel; 12 his sanity returns and Abdullah appears with a band of soldiers, to free his master. 13 They rush out to save Fenena.

The Hanging Gardens

14 – 16 Fenena and the Israelites are being



led to their deaths when Nabucco appears and the statue of the god falls in ruins. ^[17] Nabucco calls upon them all to praise the one true God, Jehovah. ^[18] Abigail (we learn) has taken poison, and as she dies, calls on God for forgiveness.



Alan Opie (Nabucco) appears frequently at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, English National Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Bayerische Staatsoper Munich, Vienna State Opera

and the Glyndebourne Festival. The roles with which he is most closely identified include Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* which he has sung at Amsterdam, Bayreuth, Munich, Turin, Vienna, Berlin (State Opera) and with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Solti; Balstrode in *Peter Grimes* (Saito Kinen Festival, Japan, Paris Opéra Bastille, Vienna, Metropolitan, English National Opera, Teatro Comunale Florence, and Covent Garden); Sharpless (*Madam Butterfly*) at the Metropolitan Opera,

Munich, Covent Garden, Cagliari, Tokyo, Sumida and Beijing; Germont père in *La traviata* (Covent Garden, English National Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin); Falstaff (English National Opera and Norwegian Opera); the Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen* (English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Spoleto Festival and La Scala) and Rigoletto (English National and the Canadian Opera, Toronto).

He has also sung in the world premieres of Berio's *Outis*, in which he sang the title role both at La Scala in Milan and at the Châtelet in Paris, Maw's *Sophie's Choice* at Covent Garden under Rattle and Sheng's *Madame Mao* at the Santa Fe Festival.

He has participated in nearly twenty complete opera recordings for Chandos singing the roles of di Luna (*Il trovatore*), Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Don Carlo (*Ernani*), and Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*). He has won two Grammys and has been nominated for the Olivier Award for 'Outstanding achievement in opera' for his performance of Falstaff with English National Opera.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, **Susan Patterson** (Abigaille) entered Samford

Philip Birmingham



Indiana University. San Francisco Opera made her an Adler Fellow for the 1986/87 season and she later made her name in the opera world by singing *La traviata* there and for Welsh National Opera. Since then she has sung the role in international venues over 150 times.

Susan Patterson has given highly successful portrayals of Margarita/Helena in Boito's *Mefistofele*, Dvořák's *Rusalka*; a new production of *Ernani* with the Reisopera in the Netherlands; Chimène (*Le Cid*), Mme. de Tourvel (*Dangerous Liaisons*) and *Tosca* with the Washington Opera and the Opéra de Montréal; Mimì (*La Bohème*), Rosalinda (*Die Fledermaus*), Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and *Aida* with the Baltimore Opera; and *Manon Lescaut* at the Spoleto Festival USA. She has also sung Donna Anna and the three heroines in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* with the

Opera Company of Philadelphia, and Magda (*La rondine*) with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

She has performed frequently with the San Francisco Opera in roles including Angelica (Vivaldi's *Orlando furioso*), Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*), Constanze (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*), and Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). In Europe, she has performed at La Scala, Milan and the Ravenna Festival in Cherubini's *Lodoïska*, with the Netherlands Opera in *Le Comte Ory* and *Mitridate*, in Aix-en-Provence as Constanze, and with the Cologne Opera and Paris Opéra-Comique in *L'occasione fa il ladro*.

As part of Chandos' Opera in English series she has recorded the roles of Amelia (*A Masked Ball*), Elvira (*Ernani*), and Electra in *Idomeneo*. Other recordings include *Le Comte Ory* and *Il matrimonio segreto*, as well as DVDs of *L'occasione fa il ladro* and *Orlando furioso*.

Alastair Miles (Zachariah) is internationally recognised as one of the world's leading basses. He has sung at the Metropolitan Opera (Giorgio in *I Puritani* and Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*); Opéra National de Paris-Bastille (Raimondo); Vienna (Philip II in



Don Carlos, Zachariah in *Nabucco*, Cardinal Brogni in Halévy's *La Juive*, de Silva in *Ernani*, and Giorgio); Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich (title role in *Saul*); San Francisco (Giorgio, Raimondo and Basilio in *Il*

barbiere di Siviglia); Amsterdam (Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro*); Teatro Real, Madrid (Philip II and Raimondo); Palermo (Walter in *Luisa Miller*); Seville (Mephistopheles in *Faust*); English National Opera (the title role in Boito's *Mephistopheles*, Zachariah, de Silva, and Ford in *Sir John in Love*); and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden (Rodolfo in *La Sonnambula*, Elmiro in *Otello*, Frère Laurent in *Roméo et Juliette*, Banquo in *Macbeth* and concert performances of Donizetti's *Dom Sebastien* (also recorded by Opera Rara)); and Mephistopheles in *La Damnation de Faust* in concerts with the London Symphony Orchestra and Sir Colin Davis in London and New York.

His highly successful concert career has taken him worldwide to perform with conductors including Giulini, Mehta, Muti, Chung, Masur, Gergiev, Gardiner and Sir Colin Davis

and the world's most prestigious orchestras. His discography currently stands at over fifty recordings including Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Verdi's Requiem, and Handel's *Saul* and *Agrippina*. For Chandos' Opera in English series he has recorded Mephistopheles (*Faust*), Ramfis (*Aida*), Colline (*La Bohème*) and a disc of Great Operatic Arias.



Jane Irwin (Fenena) studied at Lancaster University and at the Royal Northern College of Music, where she was a Peter Moores Scholar. Her many prizes include the 1993 Singers' Competition at the

Geneva International Music Competition and the 1991 Decca Kathleen Ferrier Prize.

In 1995 she made her debut at the Royal Opera House and has since sung Suzuki (*Madam Butterfly*). For Scottish Opera she has sung Suzuki, Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Waltraute (*Götterdämmerung*), Fatima (Weber's *Oberon*), and Thea (Tippett's *The Knot Garden*). For English National Opera she has sung Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*).



As a concert and recital singer Jane Irwin has appeared regularly in Britain, Europe and America, making her Carnegie Hall debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony conducted by Mariss Jansons. She has sung Mahler's *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* at the BBC Proms and the Berlin Festival, Handel's *Lucrezia* and Mozart's Coronation Mass with the San Francisco Symphony, Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra, Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* for the Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester Berlin and with the BBC Philharmonic. She has worked with the Orchestre de Paris, the Rotterdam Philharmonic, the Seattle Symphony, the Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Spanish National Orchestra, Finnish Radio Symphony, Academia di Santa Cecilia in Rome, and has given recitals at the Châtelet in Paris, and in London, Geneva, Aix-en-Provence and Japan.

The young Italian-American tenor, **Leonardo Capalbo** (Ismael) is already garnering international critical acclaim. He trained at The Juilliard School of Music, the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, California and L'Academie Musicale de Villecroze in France. Past roles include Dino Corelli (Bolcom's *A Wedding*), Fadinard (Rota's *Il cappello di paglia di Firenze*), Lenski (*Eugene Onegin*) and Rodolfo (*La Bohème*),



(*Nabucco*), Narraboth (*Salome*) and Juan (Weill's *Der Kuhhandel*). He has also performed with Israeli Opera (Alfredo in *La traviata*).



and Macduff (*Macbeth*) for Opera Holland Park.

Leonardo Capalbo made his European Operatic debut in 2004 singing Paco in de Falla's *La vida breve*, for Opera North, returning for performances as Luigi (*Il tabarro*), Ismael

(*Nabucco*), Narraboth (*Salome*) and Juan (Weill's *Der Kuhhandel*). He has also performed with Israeli Opera (Alfredo in *La traviata*).

Camilla Roberts (Anna) was born in Wrexham. Having graduated from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, she subsequently attended the Guildhall Opera Course, studying with Laura Sarti, sponsored

by The Arts Council of Wales and the Countess of Munster Trust. She completed further studies at London's National Opera Studio, sponsored by Welsh National Opera. In June 2004 Camilla won the Welsh Singers Competition.





In 2003, she joined Welsh National Opera as an Associate Artist where her roles included Micäela (*Carmen*), Diane (*Iphigénie en Tauride*) and Laura (*Iolanta*). Other recent engagements include Anna (*Nabucco*) for Opera North, Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*) for Opera Holland Park, and Anna (*Le villi*) for Chelsea Opera.

Camilla Roberts has appeared at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, St John's Smith Square and St David's Hall. She has toured Australia and New Zealand, and her concert repertoire includes Verdi's Requiem and and Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*. Recordings include a CD of Viennese arias with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.



Dean Robinson (High Priest) was born and educated in Australia, and moved to the UK to continue his vocal studies at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester, where he was the recipient of several awards and prizes, which included the Robin Kaye prize for Opera and several awards from the Peter Moores Foundation.

Operatic engagements include Pluto (*Orfeo*), Passauf in the world premiere of *Dr Ox's Experiment* and Colline (*La Bohème*) for English National Opera; Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*) and Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*) for Scottish Opera; Colline, Mr Ratcliffe (*Billy Budd*) and Angelotti (*Tosca*) for Welsh National Opera. For the Royal Opera he has performed a number of supporting roles. Recordings include Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) for Chandos and Duca d'Argile (*Prigione d'Edimburgo*) for Opera Rara.



Paul Wade (Abdullah) was born in Huddersfield and studied there before going to the Royal College of Music. He joined the English Opera Group with whom he sang many of Britten's operas, and toured Australia performing the *Church Parables*.

He has sung at all the major European festivals, San Francisco Opera, Covent Garden, Welsh National Opera, and made his English National Opera debut as Monostatos (*The Magic Flute*). He joined Opera North

at its inception and has performed over forty roles, most notably the Narrator (*Threepenny Opera*), Dancairo (*Carmen*), Mr Leonard (*Maskerade*), Father Paul (*The Duenna*, also recorded for Chandos), Monostatos, Bardolph (*Falstaff*), Guillot de Morfontaine (*Manon*) and most recently Isacco (*The Thieving Magpie*), before retiring from the company in 2004. He is now established as a highly regarded singing teacher and vocal coach.

Opera North is England's national opera company in the North, and one of Europe's leading arts organisations. The company is committed to producing work of the highest quality that excites, challenges and entertains. It tours not only throughout the North of England and to London, but also to opera houses on the continent in cities such as Prague and Barcelona, and performs at major international festivals including Edinburgh and Ravenna. An innovative approach to programming and performance style has been widely acknowledged through a number of prestigious awards, including four for its Eight Little Greats season in 2004 (Royal Philharmonic Society Opera and Music Theatre Award, The South Bank Show Opera Award, TMA Theatre Award for Outstanding

Achievement in Opera, Manchester Evening News Theatre Award for Opera).

Opera North is a vibrant, lively organisation, which actively challenges conventional perceptions of opera. Breathing new life into the classics, the company is also a strong advocate of lesser-known works and a champion of musical theatre. Opera North collaborates with artists and companies working in a variety of media, including film and visual art. Its versatile Chorus and Orchestra also perform independently, constantly revitalising their approaches to music-making. Opera North Education is one of the best-respected arts education departments in the country. The team uses opera to inspire and develop artistic creativity not only for children but also for young people, as well as those with disabilities and the wider community.

David Parry studied with Sergiu Celibidache and began his career as Sir John Pritchard's assistant. He made his debut with English Music Theatre, then became a staff conductor at Städtische Bühnen, Dortmund and at Opera North. He was Music Director of Opera 80 from 1983 to 1987 and since 1992 has been the founding Music Director of Almeida Opera.



He works extensively in both opera and concert, nationally and internationally. He has conducted several productions at English National Opera and Opera North and appears regularly with the Philharmonia and

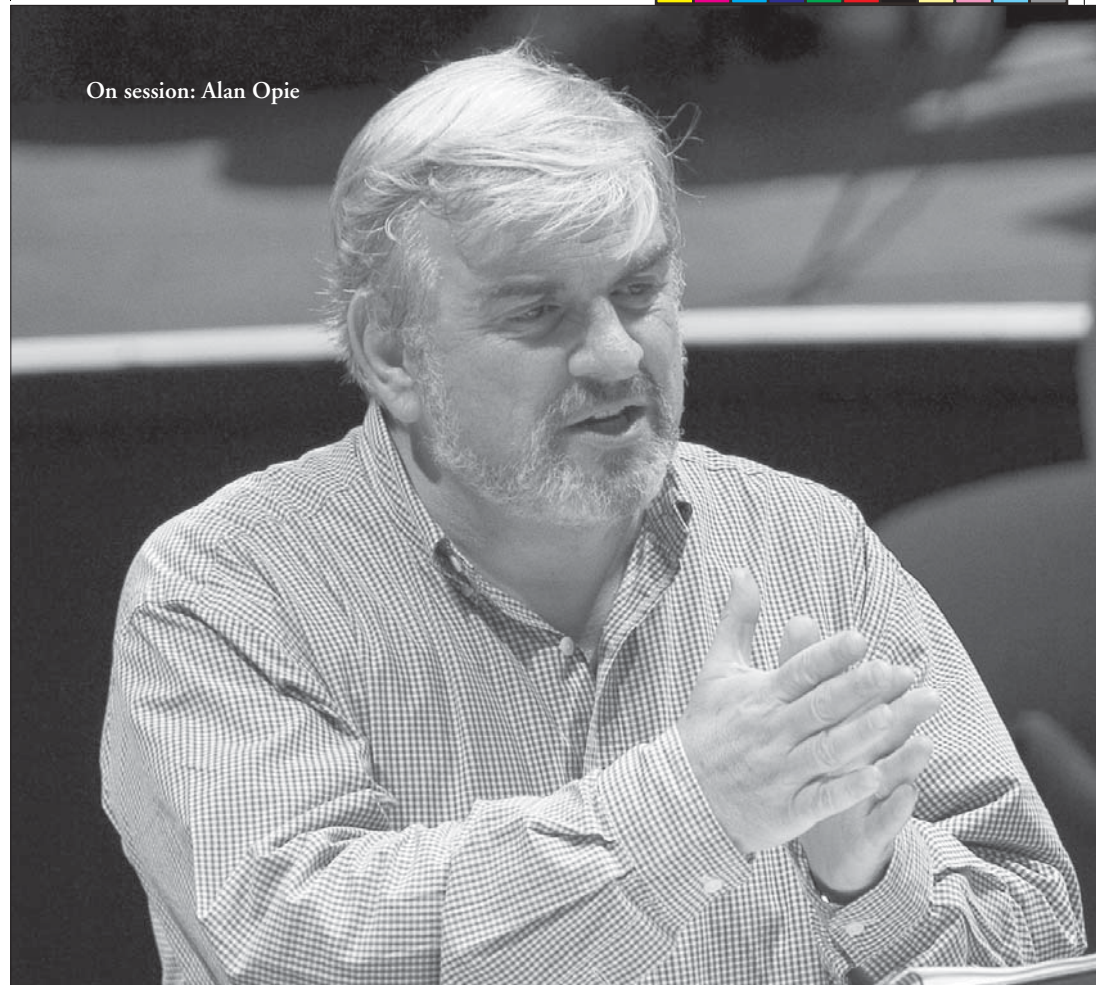
London Philharmonic Orchestras. In 1996 he made his debut at the Glyndebourne Festival conducting *Così fan tutte*, following it in 1998 with the world premiere of Jonathan Dove's *Flight*.

He is a frequent visitor to Spain where he has given concerts with most of the major Spanish orchestras. He conducted the Spanish premiere of *Peter Grimes* in Madrid and in 1996 the first Spanish production of *The Rake's Progress*. He has appeared in Germany, Switzerland, and The Netherlands, at the Pesaro Festival in Italy, the Hong Kong International Festival, in Japan with a tour of *Carmen*, and in Mexico with the UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Recent new productions he has conducted include

Fidelio at the New Zealand Festival, *Lucia di Lammermoor* at New Israeli Opera and *Don Giovanni* at Staatsoper Hannover.

His work in the recording studio includes the BBC Television production of Marschner's *Der Vampyr* and twenty-eight complete opera recordings under the sponsorship of the Peter Moores Foundation. Among these are numerous discs for the Opera Rara label which have won several awards, including the Belgian Prix Cecilia for Donizetti's *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*. For Chandos he has conducted a series of recitals of operatic arias – with Sir Thomas Allen, Bruce Ford, Alan Opie, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Barry Banks, Della Jones and Andrew Shore – as well as *Fidelio*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *A Masked Ball*, *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia of Lammermoor*, *Ernani*, *Il trovatore*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *La bohème*, *Turandot*, the award-winning *Tosca* and highlights from *Der Rosenkavalier*, all in association with the Peter Moores Foundation.

On session: Alan Opie





PETER MOORES FOUNDATION

British philanthropist Sir Peter Moores established the Peter Moores Foundation in 1964 to realise his charitable aims and, to fulfill one of these, the Compton Verney House Trust in 1993 to create a new art gallery in the country. Through his charities he has disbursed more than £104 million to a wide variety of arts, environmental and social causes 'to get things done and open doors for people'.

Sir Peter's philanthropic work began with his passion for opera: in his twenties he helped a number of young artists in the crucial, early stages of their careers, several of whom – Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Colin Davis and the late Sir Geraint Evans amongst them – became world-famous.

Today, the Peter Moores Foundation supports talented young singers with annual scholarships awarded through the Royal Northern College of Music, has made it possible for Chandos Records to issue the world's largest catalogue of operas recorded in English translation, and enabled Opera Rara to record rare bel canto repertoire which would otherwise remain inaccessible to the general public.

In live performance, the Foundation has encouraged the creation of new work and schemes to attract new audiences, financed the publication of scores, especially for world premieres of modern operas, and enabled rarely heard works to be staged by British opera companies and festivals.

Projects supported by the Foundation to help the young have ranged from a scheme to encourage young Afro-Caribbeans 'stay at school' for further education, to the endowment

of a Faculty Directorship and Chair of Management Studies at Oxford University (providing the lead donation which paved the way for the development of the Said Business School).

In 1993 the Foundation bought Compton Verney, a Grade I Georgian mansion in Warwickshire, designed by Robert Adam, with grounds by Capability Brown. Compton Verney House Trust was set up by Sir Peter to transform the derelict mansion into a world-class art gallery that would provide an especially welcoming environment for the 'first-time' gallery visitor. The gallery, which houses six permanent collections, a Learning Centre for all ages, and facilities for major visiting exhibitions, was opened in March 2004 by HRH the Prince of Wales. The Compton Verney website can be found at: www.comptonverney.org.uk

Sir Peter Moores was born in Lancashire and educated at Eton College and Christ Church, Oxford. He was a student at the Vienna Academy of Music, where he produced the Austrian premiere of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, and at the same time was an assistant producer with the Vienna State Opera, working with Viennese artists in Naples, Geneva and Rome, before returning to England in 1957 to join his father's business, Littlewoods. He was Vice-Chairman of Littlewoods in 1976, Chairman from 1977 to 1980 and remained a director until 1993.

He received the Gold Medal of the Italian Republic in 1974, an Honorary MA from Christ Church, Oxford, in 1975, and was made an Honorary Member of the Royal Northern College of Music in 1985. In 1992 he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire by HM the Queen. He was appointed CBE in 1991 and received a Knighthood in 2003 for his charitable services to the arts.



Die neue Stimme der italienischen Oper

Nabucco, uraufgeführt am Mailänder Teatro alla Scala am 9. März 1842, war das entscheidende Ereignis in der Karriere Verdis, ja sogar in seiner gesamten Lebensgeschichte. Obwohl ihr zwei andere Opern des Komponisten vorausgehen – die erste (*Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*) ein bescheidener Erfolg, die zweite (*Un giorno di regno*) ein katastrophaler Misserfolg –, betonte er dreißig Jahre später in seinen Erinnerungen, *Nabucco* sei der “wahre Anfang” gewesen, der Moment, in dem er seine eigene Stimme fand und begann, seine einzigartige Vision der italienischen Oper zu vermitteln. Natürlich waren viele dieser späteren Erinnerungen – entstanden, als Verdi eine Gestalt von internationaler Bedeutung war, und weithin verbreitet von den Journalisten, die sich nun um ihn versammelten und lautstark um Interviews buhlten – auf ganz bestimmte Zwecke ausgerichtet. Es war im späteren Leben für Verdis Selbstdarstellung wichtig, dass man ihn als “Selfmademan” anerkannte – als jemanden, der nach Jahren relativer Unbekanntheit und intensivem persönlichem Streben ins Rampenlicht getreten war. Darüber hinaus war er darauf bedacht,

von dem ikonischen Status zu profitieren, den der Sklavenchor “Va, pensiero”, die berühmteste Nummer aus *Nabucco*, im neuerlich vereinigten, eifrig nach nationalen Monumenten und anderem Symbolträchtigem suchenden Italien anzunehmen begann. Aus diesem Grund stellten seine Geschichten um *Nabucco* stets die kompositorische Krise nach der Entstehung von *Un giorno di regno* in den Vordergrund, in einem Zeitraum, als er alle Arbeitsangebote ablehnt; doch dann wird ihm mitten im Winter ein Libretto aufgedrängt, und der Text von “Va pensiero” erscheint wie magisch vor seinen Augen. Allmählich führt ihn der Gedanke an eine mögliche Vertonung des Chors zum Komponieren zurück; der Rest ist Geschichte, wie man so sagt.

Die Realität war natürlich nicht ganz so unkompliziert. Nach *Un giorno di regno* gab es tatsächlich eine Lücke in Verdis kompositorischem Schaffen, doch wurde sie teils durch Wiederaufnahmen von *Oberto* gefüllt – und Verdi unterstützte diese enthusiastisch, indem er bedeutende neue Stücke für prominente Solisten beitrug. Außerdem gibt es keine Beweise dafür,

dass “Va, pensiero” dem Publikum anfangs besonders bedeutsam erschien, als *Nabucco* schließlich aufgeführt wurde, geschweige denn, dass Verdi selbst die Nummer für einen musikalischen Brennpunkt hielt. Andererseits ist die Tatsache nicht zu leugnen, dass es sich bei *Nabucco* um einen entscheidenden Moment handelte. Aus beruflicher Sicht etablierte das Werk Verdi eindeutig auf einem höheren professionellen Niveau, insbesondere nachdem es in der Herbstsaison 1842 an der Mailänder Scala wieder aufgenommen wurde und mit siebenundfünfzig Aufführungen einen neuen Rekord aufstellte. Nie wieder musste er sich fragen, woher sein nächster Auftrag kommen würde, besonders da die Oper rasch mit Inszenierungen in ganz Italien bedacht wurde, die sich meist als ähnlich erfolgreich erwiesen wie in Mailand. Und obwohl wir gegenüber dem, was aus *Nabucco* im späteren neunzehnten Jahrhundert wurde, nach wie vor höchst skeptisch sein sollten, bleibt doch eine wichtige Frage: Was hatte die Oper an sich, das 1842 die Aufmerksamkeit des Publikums erregte? Was war neu und einzigartig an Verdis musikalischer Persönlichkeit?

Eine Antwort darauf gibt uns die allererste Nummer, die im Tempel Salomos spielt. Das babylonische Heer steht vor Jerusalem und hat

die Pforten des Tempels erreicht. Die Israeliten beklagen ihr Schicksal in einem einleitenden Chor, doch der Hohepriester Zaccaria muntert sie auf und verleiht ihnen neuen, kriegerischen Mut. Obwohl italienische Opern jener Zeit fast immer mit einem einleitenden Chor begannen, gleicht dieser kaum einem vorangegangenen. Frühere Generationen hatten jede Menge schwatzender Höflinge oder feiernder Vasallen zu sehen bekommen, aber hier wird uns das Gefühl eines höheren Anspruchs vermittelt. Der Chor bezieht seinen Effekt vorwiegend aus dem Abwechseln kontrastierender Chorgruppen: verängstigtes Volk, eine Gruppe betender Leviten, eine andere jungfräulicher Bittstellerinnen; und alle werden mit einer Unmittelbarkeit und Direktheit dargestellt, die seinerzeit gewaltsam gewirkt haben muss. Ebenso bedeutsam ist jedoch, dass Zaccarias Reaktion, obwohl in der üblichen Form einer zerteilten Arie gehalten, mehr von einem dynamischen Dialog mit den umgebenden Massen hat. In beiden Teilen greift der Chor entschieden in sein Solo ein, bedrängt Zaccaria, übernimmt seine Melodie und macht sie zum Bestandteil seiner Ausdruckswelt.

Später in der Oper wird dieses Gefühl einer neuen “Stimme” des Chors weiter ausgeführt, nicht zuletzt in Nummern wie dem “Coro e



Profezia” [Chor und Prophezeiung] im dritten Akt, die aufzeigen, wie es Verdi gelang, die üblichen chorischen und solistischen Elemente in zwingende szenische Einheiten zu binden. Die Chorführung von “Va, pensiero”, mit dem die Szene beginnt, ist höchst originell und scheint wiederum den Massen einen neuen Rang zuzusprechen (Rossini meinte weitblickend, es handele sich “nicht so sehr um einen Chor als vielmehr eine große Arie für Soprane, Alte, Tenöre und Bässe”); doch der sanften nostalgischen Stimmung wird dann gewaltsam die energische Prophezeiung Zaccarias entgegengesetzt – insbesondere in der abschließenden Cabaletta wird den feindlichen Heerscharen ein blutiges Ende vorhergesagt. Doch von besonderer Bedeutung ist, dass die beiden Hälften der Szene durch gemeinsame rhythmische und melodische Motive eng miteinander verbunden sind: Sie werden diesbezüglich zum Bestandteil der gleichen musikalischen Aussage und gewinnen jeweils durch die unmittelbare Nähe zum anderen Teil. Auch hier scheint der Chor am expressiven Schwerpunkt der Oper teilzuhaben.

Doch die Neuartigkeit von *Nabucco* ist nicht auf jene Nummern beschränkt, an denen der Chor beteiligt ist, ganz gleich, wie

eindrucksvoll diese Momente auch sein mögen. Kein Komponist jener Epoche hätte so enorm erfolgreich sein können wie Verdi, wenn er nicht auch bedeutende neue Wege gefunden hätte, für die Solostimmen zu komponieren, die nach wie vor im Zentrum der Kommunikation zwischen der Oper und ihrem Publikum standen. Dass Verdi vom Anbeginn seiner Karriere auch in dieser Hinsicht bemerkenswerte Originalität bewies, ist häufig durch die Betonung des Choranteils verdeckt worden und ist eine Betrachtung wert. Ein gutes Beispiel ist seine neuartige Umsetzung der Figur der Abigail in *Nabucco* – die Rolle war wohl ursprünglich für die deutsche Sopranistin Sophie Loewe gedacht, wurde aber schließlich bei der Uraufführung von Giuseppina Strepponi gesungen, die bald darauf zur Lebensgefährtin des Komponisten wurde. Vorwiegend inspiriert von den besonderen Fähigkeiten der Loewe (Strepponi trat erst spät auf den Plan), erfand Verdi mit Abigaille einen neuen Typ von dramatischem Sopran im italienischen Stil.

Das begleitete Rezitativ, mit dem sich Abigaille im ersten Akt einführt, etabliert sofort ihren ungewöhnlichen Stimmtypus, der Kraft im tiefen Register, Wendigkeit hoch über dem Liniensystem und durchweg eine überzeugende dramatische Präsenz erfordert.

Im Kontext der Donizettischen Norm, die 1842 vorherrschte und in der Soprane meist in die Kategorie “dahinwelkende Dame” einzuordnen waren, vor allem geschätzt für ihren zarten Lyrismus und Anflüge extravaganter Koloratur (das klassische Beispiel ist Lucia di Lammermoor), waren dies außergewöhnliche Anforderungen. Noch wichtiger ist jedoch die groß angelegte Arie, die Verdi für Abigaille zum Anfang des zweiten Akts schrieb. Von der äußeren Form her scheint sich die Nummer recht eng ans Donizettische Vorbild zu halten, mit einem konventionellen mehrsätzigen Aufbau, der vom lyrischen langsamen Satz zur energischeren Cabaletta fortschreitet. Doch intern finden sich entscheidende Änderungen. Nach einem intensiven Rezitativ wenden sich Abigailles Gedanken im langsamen Satz “Anch’io dischiuso un giorno” [Auch mein Herz war der Freud’ einst offen] der Liebe zu. Diese Nummer ist zugegebenermaßen stark ornamentiert, und jede der zwei Takte langen Phrasen endet mit einer vokalen Ausschmückung; doch sind die Ornamente, wie es für Verdi typisch ist, rigoros eingegrenzt, so dass ihre Zunahme zum Höhepunkt bezaubernd energisch und vorantreibend wirkt. Hier findet sich, mit anderen Worten,

nichts von der Donizettischen Tendenz, mit dem Fortschreiten der zunehmend blumigen Arie in immer lockerere rhythmische Perioden abzugleiten. Die Cabaletta “Salgo già del trono aurato” [Auf des Thrones goldene Stufen] ist in dieser Hinsicht noch radikaler. Sie kehrt zum eindringlichen Tonfall des Rezitativs zurück und es gelingt ihr wiederum, wenn auch in einem viel dynamischeren Kontext, den ornamentalen Aspekt der Musik unter Kontrolle zu halten. Weit davon entfernt, sich gegen Ende in vokale Virtuosität “aufzulösen”, ordnet die Arie die Ornamentik weiterhin unter und beschränkt sie auf streng gebundene Perioden. Derartige Beispiele ließen sich beliebig anführen – sie demonstrieren zumindest ansatzweise, wie die für Verdis frühe Opern so typische Energie erzeugt wurde: durch Straffung der Form, verbunden mit Intensivierung der Ausdruckskraft.

Die Unterschiede im Stimmtypus von Abigaille und Lucia lassen sich auch bei den anderen Hauptrollen in *Nabucco* nachweisen: In allen Stimmregistern setzen sich Robustheit und schieres Stimmvolumen allmählich gegen vokale Flexibilität durch, wobei die neue Direktheit und “realistische” Darstellungsweise Hand in Hand gehen mit einer Tendenz, immer intensiver



auf leidenschaftliche Deklamation statt nahtloses Belcanto zu bauen. Wir erkennen das am deutlichsten am Hervortreten des “Verdischen” Baritons, für den Nabucco das erste Exempel ist. Von seinem ersten Auftritt an ist Nabuccos Rolle von hoher Tonlage, einer Tendenz zu intensiver Deklamation und dem weitgehenden Fehlen ornamentaler Stimmführung gekennzeichnet, ganz im Unterschied zum zarten Schmelz des zwanzig Jahre zuvor herrschenden “Basso cantante”. Das Finale des zweiten Teils ist in dieser Hinsicht wohl Nabuccos krönender Moment. Der langsame Satz des Finales, “S’appressan gl’istanti” [Weh! Heut ist ein Tag erschienen], erzielt seine Wirkung nicht mit individueller Charakterisierung (alle Hauptfiguren singen die gleiche Melodie), sondern mit unerbittlicher Zunahme an satztechnischer Komplexität und klanglicher Eindringlichkeit. Doch dann wendet sich Nabucco an die Menge und erklärt sich nicht nur zu ihrem König, sondern zu ihrem Gott. Ein Blitzschlag streckt ihn ob seiner Blasphemie nieder, und die Menge reagiert mit schockiertem Gemurmel. Die Konventionen der italienischen Oper würden daraufhin einen schnellen Schlusssatz erwarten lassen, doch stattdessen entschied sich Verdi für eine Wahnsinnszene des Nabucco. Solche

Szenen waren in der Vergangenheit meist den Sopranen vorbehalten (das klassische Beispiel ist wiederum Lucia), doch Verdi weiß die neue emotionale Bandbreite der Männerstimme für sich zu nutzen. In dieser begeisternden Szene wechselt der schmerzgefüllte König ganz außer sich zwischen zwei völlig unterschiedlichen Stimmungen: Einerseits verfällt er in wütende Deklamation, wenn er mit seinem Schicksal hadert, doch dann tritt in einer unvermittelten und wiederholten Wandlung ein viel sanfterer Aspekt in den Vordergrund, wenn er seine Schutzlosigkeit hinterfragt und schließlich in Ohnmacht fällt.

Einen Monat nach Verdis Tod im Jahre 1901, als er allgemein als größter Italiener seiner Epoche angesehen wurde, wurden seine sterblichen Überreste mittels einer feierlichen Prozession durch Mailand in Begleitung von hunderttausenden Trauernden zu ihrer letzten Ruhestätte in der Casa di Riposo überführt – er hatte sich im Alter das Heim für Musiker im Ruhestand als philanthropisches Denkmal errichtet. Die Prozession wurde vom Orchester und Chor der Mailänder Scala auf den Weg gebracht, von denen die Menge zu einer Darbietung von “Va, pensiero” ermuntert wurde. Die Tatsache, dass dieser um die sechzig Jahre zuvor entstandene Chor aus

Nabucco die Gefühle zeitgenössischer Italiener für ihren verstorbenen Helden zum Ausdruck bringen konnte, ließ erkennen, in welchem Ausmaß Verdis Musik ins Bewusstsein der Nation eingegangen war. Doch all das geschah vor hundert Jahren. *Nabucco* sollte nicht für alle Zeiten von diesen nostalgischen Momenten bestimmt sein, auch wenn die sanften Konturen von “Va pensiero” solche Attitüden stets befördern werden. Die Oper weist viele weitere bemerkenswerte Merkmale auf, zahlreiche andere Eigenarten, die das Hervortreten einer vitalen neuen Präsenz im italienischen Opernleben ankündigen: Diese Stimme sollte sich über die folgenden vierzig Jahre hin auf erstaunliche Weise entwickeln, behielt aber stets etwas von der Energie und Kraft, die *Nabucco* so nachdrücklich proklamiert.

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Übersetzung: Bernd Müller

Synopse

COMPACT DISC ONE

[1] Ouvertüre

Erster Teil: Jerusalem

Im Tempel Salomos zu Jerusalem

[2] – [6] Die Priester und das Volk Jerusalems beklagen die Eroberung ihres Landes durch die babylonischen Heerscharen, angeführt von Nabucco und seiner vermeintlichen älteren Tochter Abigaille. Die Juden haben Nabuccos andere Tochter Fenena gefangen genommen und halten sie als Geisel.

[7] Als Ismaele und Fenena allein im Tempel zurückbleiben, erfahren wir, dass sie sich lieben. [8] Abigaille tritt auf, gefolgt von babylonischen Soldaten, die als Hebräer verkleidet sind. [9] – [11] Auch Abigaille hat sich während seiner babylonischen Haft in Ismaele verliebt und verspottet ihn nun mit ihrem Sieg. Zaccaria eilt herbei, [12] – [13] als Nabucco auf die Pforten des Tempels zureitet. [14] Zaccaria droht Fenena zu töten, doch Ismaele rettet sie. [15] Nabucco befiehlt sofort die Zerstörung des Tempels.

Zweiter Teil: Der Frevler

Die königlichen Gemächer in Babylon

[16] – [17] Gepeinigt von ihrer unerwiderten Liebe zu Ismaele erfährt Abigaille, dass sie die Tochter von Sklaven ist. [18] Der Oberpriester des Baal kommt mit der Nachricht, dass Fenena die Israeliten befreit hat. Er sagt, er



habe bereits das Gerücht verbreitet, Nabucco sei im Kampf gefallen, ^[19] und Abigaille beschließt, selbst die Macht zu ergreifen.

Ein Gemach im Palast

^[20] – ^[23] Ismaele wird von den Juden wegen seines Verrats an ihrer Sache verflucht.

^[24] – ^[26] Abigaille wird zur Königin erhoben und will sich gerade selbst krönen, da erscheint Nabucco und entwendet ihr die Krone.

^[27] Nabucco wendet sich an die Menge und erklärt sich nicht nur zu ihrem König, sondern zu ihrem Gott. Mit einem Blitzschlag reißt ihm eine übernatürliche Macht die Krone vom Kopf. ^[28] Nabucco scheint in geistige Umnachtung zu verfallen. Abigaille hebt die Krone auf und setzt sie sich aufs eigene Haupt.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Dritter Teil: Die Prophezeiung

In Babylons hängenden Gärten

^[1] Die siegreiche Abigaille ist zur Königin Assyriens gekrönt worden. ^[2] Nabucco wird hereingeführt ^[3] und lässt sich von Abigaille übertölpeln, ein Dekret zu unterzeichnen, das sämtliche Juden zum Tode verurteilt. ^[4] – ^[5] Zu spät erkennt er, dass er getäuscht wurde

und seine eigene Tochter zum Tode verdammt hat. ^[6] Vergebens fleht er um Fenenas Leben.

An den Ufern des Euphrat

^[7] Die hebräischen Sklaven beklagen ihre Gefangenschaft in einem Chor voll nostalgischer Sehnsucht nach ihrem Heimatland. ^[8] – ^[9] Der Hohepriester Zaccaria prophezeit den Niedergang Babylons.

Vierter Teil: Das zerbrochene Götzenbild

Die königlichen Gemächer

^[10] Nabucco, ein Gefangener in seinem eigenen Palast, hört einen Trauermarsch und sieht, wie seine Tochter Fenena zu ihrer Hinrichtung geführt wird. ^[11] Er betet zu Jehovah, dem Gott Israels; ^[12] sein Geist erhellt sich wieder, und Abdallo erscheint mit einer Truppe Soldaten, um seinen Herrn zu befreien. ^[13] Sie eilen hinaus in der Hoffnung, Fenena retten zu können.

Die hängenden Gärten

^[14] – ^[16] Fenena und die Israeliten werden zum Richtplatz geleitet, als Nabucco erscheint und das Götzenbild des Baal in sich zusammenbricht. ^[17] Nabucco ruft alle Anwesenden auf, den einzig wahren Gott Jehovah zu preisen. ^[18] Abigaille hat (wie

wir erfahren) Gift genommen, und noch im Sterben fleht sie Gott um Vergebung an.

Übersetzung: Bernd Müller

Alan Opie (Nabucco) tritt regelmäßig am Royal Opera House Covent Garden, an der English National Opera, der Metropolitan Opera, an der Mailänder Scala, der Bayerischen Staatsoper München, der Wiener Staatsoper und beim Glyndebourne Festival auf. Zu den Rollen, mit denen er am häufigsten in Verbindung gebracht wird, zählen Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, den er in Amsterdam, Bayreuth, München, Turin, Wien, Berlin (an der Staatsoper) und mit dem Chicago Symphony Orchestra unter Solti gesungen hat; Balstrode in *Peter Grimes* (Saito Kinen Festival in Japan, Pariser Opéra-Bastille, Wien, Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera, Teatro Comunale Florenz und Covent Garden); Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) an der Metropolitan Opera, in München, Covent Garden, Cagliari, Tokio, Sumida und Beijing; Germont père in *La traviata* (Covent Garden, English National Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin); Falstaff (English National Opera, Norwegische Oper); der Förster in *Das schlaue Fuchslein* (English National Opera, Scottish

Opera, Spoleto Festival und La Scala) sowie Rigoletto (English National Opera und die Canadian Opera in Toronto).

Daneben gab er die Uraufführungen von Berios *Outis*, dessen Titelrolle er sowohl an der Mailänder Scala als auch am Théâtre Châtelet in Paris gesungen hat, Maws *Sophie's Choice* in Covent Garden unter Simon Rattle and Shengs *Madame Mao* beim Santa Fe Festival.

Er ist an fast zwanzig kompletten Opernaufzeichnungen für Chandos beteiligt gewesen, wobei er die Rollen von di Luna (*Il trovatore*), Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Don Carlo (*Ernani*), und Figaro (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) interpretierte. Er wurde mit zwei Grammy-Preisen ausgezeichnet und ist für seine Darstellung des Falstaff an der English National Opera für einen Olivier Award in der Kategorie "Überragende Leistung auf dem Gebiet der Oper" nominiert worden.

Susan Patterson (Abigaille) wurde in Birmingham in Alabama geboren; sie begann an der Samford University ein Klavierstudium, wurde jedoch ermutigt, ihren Lehrplan um Stimmbildung zu erweitern.



Nach dem Studienabschluss an der Florida State University setzte sie ihre Gesangsbildung an der Indiana University bei Virginia Zeani fort. Als Stipendiatin der Adler Fellowship wirkte sie in der Saison 1986/87 an der San Francisco Opera; mit ihrer Interpretation von *La traviata* dort und an der Welsh National Opera machte sie sich einen Namen in der Opernwelt. Seither hat sie die Rolle mehr als einhundertfünfzigmal gesungen.

Susan Patterson hat höchst erfolgreiche Darbietungen als Margarita/Helena in Boitos *Mefistofele* und als Dvořáks *Rusalka*, in einer Neuinszenierung von *Ernani* an der niederländischen Reisopera, als Chimene (*Le Cid*), Mme de Tourvel (*Dangerous Liaisons*) und *Tosca* an der Washington Opera, Mimì (*La Bohème*) und *Aida* an der Baltimore Opera sowie *Manon Lescaut* beim Spoleto Festival in den USA aufzuweisen. Sie hat außerdem die Donna Anna sowie die drei Protagonistinnen in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* mit der Opera Company von Philadelphia und Magda (*La rondine*) am Opera Theatre in Saint Louis gesungen.

Regelmäßig ist sie an der San Francisco Opera aufgetreten, u.a. in den Rollen der Angelica (Vivaldis *Orlando furioso*), Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*), Constanze

(*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) und Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). In Europa stand sie an der Mailänder Scala in Cherubinis *Lodoïska*, an der Nederlandse Opera in *Le Comte Ory* und *Mitridate*, in Aix-en-Provence als Constanze und am Opernhaus Köln und der Pariser Opéra-Comique in *L'occasione fa il ladro* auf der Bühne.

Im Rahmen der Chandos-Reihe "Opera in English" hat sie die Rollen der Amelia (*A Masked Ball*), der Elvira (*Ernani*) und der Electra in *Idomeneo* aufgenommen. Zu ihren weiteren Einspielungen gehören *Le Comte Ory* und *Il matrimonio segreto*.

Alastair Miles (Zaccaria) ist international als einer der weltweit führenden Bassisten anerkannt. Er hat am Metropolitan Opera House (Giorgio in *I Puritani* und Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*) gesungen, an der Opéra National de Paris-Bastille (Raimondo), in Wien (Philipp II. in *Don Carlos*, Zaccaria in *Nabucco*, Kardinal Brogni in Halévys *La Juive*, de Silva in *Ernani* und Giorgio), an der Bayerischen Staatsoper München (die Titelrolle in *Saul*), in San Francisco (Giorgio, Raimondo und Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*), in Amsterdam (Figaro

in *Le nozze di Figaro*), am Teatro Real in Madrid (Philipp II. und Raimondo), in Palermo (Walter in *Luisa Miller*) und Sevilla (Mephisto in *Faust*), an der English National Opera (die Titelrolle in Boitos *Mephistopheles*, Zaccaria, de Silva sowie Ford in *Sir John in Love*) und am Royal Opera House Covent Garden (Rodolfo in *La Sonnambula*, Elmiro in *Otello*, Frère Laurent in *Roméo et Juliette*, Banquo in *Macbeth* und Konzertdarbietungen von Donizettis *Dom Sebastien* (auch von Opera Rara aufgenommen)); hinzu kommt sein Mephistopheles in konzertanten Aufführungen von *La Damnation de Faust* mit dem London Symphony Orchestra unter Sir Colin Davis in London und New York.

Seine höchst erfolgreiche Konzertkarriere hat ihn in alle Welt geführt, zu Aufführungen mit Dirigenten wie Giulini, Mehta, Muti, Chung, Masur, Gergiew, Gardiner und Sir Colin Davis sowie den weltweit führenden Orchestern. Seine Diskographie umfasst derzeit mehr als fünfzig Einspielungen, darunter Mendelssohns *Elias*, Verdis Requiem sowie Händels *Saul* und *Agrippina*. Für die Chandos-Reihe "Opera in English" hat er Mephisto (*Faust*), Ramfis (*Aida*), Colline (*La Bohème*) und eine CD mit Großen Opernarien aufgenommen.

Jane Irwin (Fenena) absolvierte ihre Ausbildung an der Universität Lancaster und am Royal Northern College of Music im Rahmen eines Peter-Moores-Stipendiums. Zu ihren zahlreichen Auszeichnungen gehören der Gesangspreis beim Internationalen Genfer Musikwettbewerb im Jahre 1993 und der Decca-Kathleen-Ferrier-Preis 1991.

Im Jahre 1995 gab sie ihr Debüt am Royal Opera House und hat dort seither die Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*) gesungen. Für Scottish Opera hat sie Suzuki, Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Waltraute (*Götterdämmerung*), Fatima (Webers *Oberon*), und Thea (in Tippetts *The Knot Garden*) gegeben. An der English National Opera hat sie als Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*) auf der Bühne gestanden.

Als Konzert- und Recitalsängerin ist Jane Irwin regelmäßig in Großbritannien, Kontinentaleuropa und Amerika zu Gast; ihr Debüt in der New Yorker Carnegie Hall gab sie mit der Pittsburgh Symphony unter der Leitung von Mariss Jansons. Bei den BBC-Promenadenkonzerten und den Berliner Festspielen hat sie Mahlers *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, Händels *Lucrezia* und Mozarts Krönungsmesse mit der San Francisco Symphony, Beethovens *Missa Solemnis* mit den Berliner Symphonikern,



Mahlers *Lied von der Erde* mit dem Deutschen Symphonie-Orchester Berlin und mit dem BBC Philharmonic Orchestra gesungen.

Sie hat mit dem Orchestre de Paris, dem Rotterdams Philharmonisch Orkest, der Seattle Symphony, dem Schwedischen Kammerorchester, dem Spanischen Nationalorchester, der Finnischen Radiosymphonie und der Academia di Santa Cecilia in Rom zusammengearbeitet und Recitals am Châtelet in Paris sowie in London, Genf, Aix-en-Provence und Japan gegeben.

Der junge italienisch – amerikanische Tenor **Leonardo Capalbo** (Ismaele) erwirbt sich bereits hohes Lob bei Kritikern in aller Welt. Er absolvierte seine musikalische Ausbildung an der Juilliard School of Music, der Music Academy of the West im kalifornischen Santa Barbara und in Frankreich an der Academie Musicale de Villecroze. Zu seinen bisherigen Rollen gehören Dino Corelli (Bolcoms *A Wedding*), Fadinard (Rotas *Il cappello di paglia di Firenze*), Lenski (*Eugen Onegin*) und Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), sowie Macduff (*Macbeth*) an der Opera Holland Park.

Leonardo Capalbo gab sein europäisches Operndebüt 2004 als Paco in de Fallas *La vida breve* an der Opera North, wohin er als Luigi (*Il tabarro*), Ismaele (*Nabucco*),

Narraboth (*Salome*) und Juan (in Weills *Der Kuhhandel*) zurückkehrte. Daneben ist er (als Alfredo in *La traviata*) an der Israelischen Oper aufgetreten.

Camilla Roberts (Anna) wurde im englischen Wrexham geboren. Nachdem sie die Guildhall School of Music and Drama absolviert hatte, nahm sie am Guildhall Opera Course teil, wo sie bei Laura Sarti studierte, finanziell unterstützt vom Arts Council of Wales und dem Countess of Munster Trust. Weiterführende Studien führten sie ans Londoner National Opera Studio, gefördert von der Welsh National Opera. Im Juni 2004 gewann Camilla Roberts den Walisischen Gesangswettbewerb.

Im Jahre 2003 trat sie der Welsh National Opera als außerordentliches Mitglied bei, und dort sang sie u.a. die Rollen der Micæla (*Carmen*), Diana (*Iphigénie en Tauride*) und Laura (*Iolanta*). Weitere Engagements in letzter Zeit umfassten Anna (*Nabucco*) an der Opera North, Tatjana (*Eugen Onegin*) an der Opera Holland Park sowie Anna (*Le villi*) an der Chelsea Opera.

Camilla Roberts ist in der Queen Elizabeth Hall, in St John's Smith Square und der St David's Hall aufgetreten. Sie hat

Tourneen durch Australien und Neuseeland unternommen, und ihr Konzertrepertoire umfasst Verdis Requiem sowie Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*. Zu ihren Einspielungen auf Tonträger gehört eine CD mit Wiener Arien mit dem Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Dean Robinson (Gran Sacerdote) wurde in Australien geboren und ausgebildet; er siedelte nach England über, um seine Gesangsstudien am Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester fortzusetzen, wo er mehrere Auszeichnungen und Preise gewann, darunter der Robin-Kaye-Preis für Oper und mehrere Auszeichnungen der Peter Moores Foundation.

Zu seinen Opernengagements zählen Pluto (*Orfeo*), Passauf in der Uraufführung von *Dr Ox's Experiment* und Colline (*La Bohème*) an der English National Opera; Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*) und Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*) an der Scottish Opera; Colline, Mr Ratcliffe (*Billy Budd*) und Angelotti (*Tosca*) an der Welsh National Opera. Für die Royal Opera Covent Garden hat er eine Reihe von Nebenrollen gesungen. Seine Aufnahmen auf Tonträger umfassen u.a. Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) für Chandos Records und Duca d'Argile (*Prigione d'Edimburgo*) für Opera Rara.

Paul Wade (Abdallo) wurde im englischen Huddersfield geboren, wo er auch studierte, ehe er nach London ans Royal College of Music ging. Er trat der English Opera Group bei, mit der er viele von Benjamin Britten's Opern gesungen hat, und im Rahmen einer Australientournee trat er in den *Church Parables* auf.

Er hat bei allen bedeutenden europäischen Festivals gesungen, außerdem an der San Francisco Opera, in Covent Garden, an der Welsh National Opera, und sein Debüt an der English National Opera gab er als Monostatos (*The Magic Flute*). Der Opera North trat er bei ihrer Gründung bei und hat dort mehr als vierzig Rollen gesungen, insbesondere den Ausrufer (in der *Dreigroschenoper*), Dancairo (*Carmen*), Mr. Leonard (*Maskerade*), Vater Paul (Roberto Gerhards *The Duenna*, auch für Chandos eingespielt), Monostatos, Bardolph (*Falstaff*), Guillot de Morfontaine (*Manon*) und jüngstens Isacco (*The Thieving Magpie*), ehe er sich 2004 aus dem Ensemble zurückzog. Er ist heute als hoch angesehener Gesangslehrer und Stimmbildner etabliert.

Opera North ist als staatliches Opernensemble für Nordengland eine der führenden Kunstinstitutionen Europas. Das Ensemble



ist der aufregenden, herausfordernden und unterhaltsamen Arbeit auf höchstem Niveau verpflichtet. Seine Tourneen führen nicht nur durch den englischen Norden, sondern auch nach London und auf den Kontinent, zu Veranstaltungen in Städten wie Prag und Barcelona, aber auch zu großen internationalen Festspielen wie Edinburgh und Ravenna. Ein innovativer Ansatz zur Programmgestaltung und zum Interpretationsstil ist mit verschiedenen begehrten Auszeichnungen anerkannt worden, allein vier davon für die Saison "Eight Little Greats" 2004 (Royal Philharmonic Society Opera and Music Theatre Award, The South Bank Show Opera Award, TMA Theatre Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, Manchester Evening News Theatre Award for Opera).

Opera North ist eine dynamische, lebhaftes Organisation, die herkömmliche Vorstellungen von der Oper aktiv in Frage stellt. Sie erweckt Klassiker zu neuem Leben, setzt sich energisch für weniger bekannte Werke ein und tritt als Fürsprecher des Musiktheaters auf. Opera North pflegt die Zusammenarbeit mit Künstlern und Ensembles in den verschiedensten Medien, wie Film und bildende Kunst. Seine vielseitigen Chor- und Orchesterkräfte treten auch unabhängig

auf, unter ständiger Revitalisierung ihres musikalischen Selbstverständnisses. Opera North Education ist eines der angesehensten Bildungszentren Englands im künstlerischen Bereich, das mit Hilfe der Oper die künstlerische Kreativität der Mitbürger fördert und entwickelt.

David Parry hat bei Sergiu Celibidache studiert und seine berufliche Laufbahn als Assistent von Sir John Pritchard begonnen. Er hat am English Music Theatre debütiert und wurde dann Dirigent mit Festvertrag an den Städtischen Bühnen Dortmund und an der Opera North. Von 1983 bis 1987 war er Musikdirektor der Opera 80 und seit 1992 Gründungsmitglied und Direktor der Almeida Opera.

Er übt in Großbritannien und international eine weitgespannte Tätigkeit in den Bereichen Oper und Konzert aus, hat mehrere Produktionen der English National Opera und der Opera North dirigiert und tritt regelmäßig mit dem Philharmonia Orchestra und dem London Philharmonic Orchestra auf. 1996 gab er sein Debüt beim Glyndebourne Festival mit *Così fan tutte* und hat dort 1998 die Uraufführung von Jonathan Doves *Flight* geleitet.

Er ist häufig in Spanien zu Gast und hat mit den meisten bedeutenden spanischen Orchestern Konzerte gegeben. In Madrid hat er die spanische Uraufführung von *Peter Grimes* dirigiert, und 1996 die erste spanische Inszenierung von *The Rake's Progress*. Er ist in Deutschland, der Schweiz und den Niederlanden aufgetreten, bei den Festspielen in Pesaro, beim Hong Kong International Festival, in Japan anlässlich einer *Carmen*-Tournee und in Mexiko mit dem UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Zu den Neuproduktionen, die er in letzter Zeit dirigiert hat, zählen *Fidelio* beim New Zealand Festival, *Lucia di Lammermoor* an der New Israeli Opera und *Don Giovanni* an der Staatsoper Hannover.

Seine Tätigkeit im Aufnahmestudio umfaßt die Produktion von Marschners *Der Vampyr* fürs BBC-Fernsehen und achtundzwanzig vollständige Opernaufzeichnungen unter

der Schirmherrschaft der Peter Moores Foundation. Darunter befinden sich zahlreiche Aufnahmen der Reihe Opera Rara, die mehrere Preise gewonnen haben, beispielsweise den belgischen Prix Cecilia für Donizettis *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra*. Für Chandos hat er die Aufzeichnung einer Serie von Programmen mit Opernarien geleitet (mit Sir Thoms Allen, Bruce Ford, Alan Opie, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Barry Banks, Della Jones und Andrew Shore), außerdem *Fidelio*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *A Masked Ball*, *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia of Lammermoor*, *Ernani*, *Il trovatore*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *La bohème*, *Turandot*, die preisgekrönte *Tosca* und Highlights aus dem *Rosenkavalier*, jeweils in Zusammenarbeit mit der Peter Moores Foundation.



On session: Susan Patterson



On session: Alan Opie





La nouvelle voix de l'opéra italien

Nabucco, créé au Teatro alla Scala de Milan, le 9 mars 1842, fut l'événement déterminant de la carrière du compositeur, en fait de l'histoire de sa vie. Bien que cet ouvrage ait été précédé de deux autres opéras – le premier (*Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio*) un succès limité, le second (*Un giorno di regno*) un échec catastrophique –, le compositeur souligna dans ses souvenirs, trente ans plus tard, comment *Nabucco* fut son “véritable début” : le moment où il trouva sa véritable voix et commença à communiquer sa vision unique de l'opéra italien. Bien sûr, un grand nombre de ces souvenirs tardifs – qui datent d'une époque où Verdi était devenu une personnalité internationale et qui furent propagés par les journalistes qui l'entouraient alors et se bouscullaient pour avoir des interviews – visaient un objectif bien défini. Il était important pour l'image que Verdi voulait donner de lui-même à un âge avancé qu'il soit considéré comme un *self-made man* – qu'on pense de lui qu'il était devenu une vedette après une période de relative obscurité et de lutte personnelle intense. Qui plus est, il tenait à tirer partie de la notoriété

emblématique que le plus célèbre numéro de *Nabucco*, le chœur des esclaves hébreux “Va, pensiero”, commençait à acquérir dans une Italie nouvellement unifiée à la recherche de chefs-d'œuvre nationaux et autres éléments symboliques. Pour y parvenir, il ne cessa de souligner, dans ce qu'il raconta à propos de *Nabucco*, qu'il avait traversé une crise de composition après *Un giorno di regno*, période au cours de laquelle il refusa toute offre d'œuvre nouvelle; mais ensuite, dans les profondeurs de l'hiver, un livret lui fut imposé et les paroles du “Va, pensiero” apparurent de façon presque magique à ses yeux. Finalement, c'est en pensant à la façon dont le chœur pourrait sonner qu'il revint à la composition; et, comme chacun sait, tout le monde connaît la suite.

Mais la réalité n'est pas si nette, ce qui est inévitable. Après *Un giorno di regno*, il y a bien eu une sorte de trou dans la carrière de compositeur de Verdi, mais ce trou fut comblé en partie par des reprises d'*Oberto* – reprises que Verdi encouragea avec enthousiasme en écrivant quelques numéros nouveaux et importants pour des solistes éminents. Qui plus est, lorsque *Nabucco* vit finalement le

jour, rien ne prouve que “Va, pensiero” fut un numéro particulièrement déterminant pour les premiers auditoires, d'autant moins que, dans l'esprit de Verdi, c'était un point focal musical. D'autre part, personne ne discute le fait que *Nabucco* fut effectivement un moment essentiel. En termes professionnels, cet ouvrage permit à Verdi de gravir avec assurance un nouvel échelon de l'échelle professionnelle, en particulier lors de la reprise à la Scala à l'automne 1842 qui atteignit le nombre record de cinquante-sept représentations. C'en était fini des interrogations pour savoir d'où pourrait bien venir la prochaine commande, notamment lorsque son opéra commença à circuler dans toute l'Italie, ce qui se produisit très vite, avec un succès généralement comparable à celui qu'il avait connu à Milan. Ainsi, même si nous devons continuer à beaucoup nous méfier de ce qu'est devenu *Nabucco* à la fin du XIX^{ème} siècle, il reste encore une question importante: qu'y avait-il donc dans cet opéra pour que les auditeurs de 1842 se redressent et écoutent? Qu'y avait-il de nouveau et de caractéristique dans la personnalité musicale de Verdi?

On trouve une réponse dans le tout premier numéro, qui se déroule à l'intérieur du temple de Salomon. L'armée babylonienne a atteint Jérusalem et est aux portes du temple. Les

Israélites se plaignent de leur sort dans un chœur initial, mais le prophète Zaccharie les rassemble et leur insuffle un nouvel esprit belliqueux. Même si l'opéra italien de l'époque commençait presque toujours par un chœur initial, rares sont ceux qui ressemblent à celui-ci dans les ouvrages antérieurs. Les générations précédentes avaient vu beaucoup de courtisans bavards et de vassaux en train de faire la fête, mais ici on a un panorama beaucoup plus grandiose. Le chœur tire une grande partie de son effet de l'alternance de groupes choraux contrastés: un peuple terrifié, un groupe de Lévites en prière, un autre de vierges suppliantes; et tous sont présentés d'une manière directe et immédiate qui a dû surprendre par sa violence à l'époque. Toutefois, il y a un autre élément tout aussi important: la réponse de Zaccharie, même si elle revêt la forme habituelle de l'aria en deux mouvements, ressemble davantage à un dialogue dynamique avec les masses qui l'entourent. Dans les deux mouvements, le chœur intervient de manière décisive dans son solo, envahissant l'espace imparti à Zaccharie et reprenant sa mélodie qu'il intègre à son propre univers expressif.

Plus loin dans l'ouvrage, Verdi tire parti de cette notion de nouvelle “voix” chorale,



notamment dans des numéros comme le “Coro e profezia” (“Chœur et prophétie”) à l’acte III, qui montre comment le musicien savait relier les éléments choraux et solistes traditionnels dans des entités scéniques fascinantes. L’écriture chorale de “Va, pensiero”, qui ouvre la scène, est très originale et semble une fois encore imposer un nouveau statut aux masses (Rossini en disait avec prescience qu’il ne s’agissait “pas tant d’un chœur que d’une grande aria pour sopranos, altos, ténors et basses”); mais sa veine douce et nostalgique est ensuite violemment contrée par la prophétie énergique de Zacharie qui lui succède, en particulier par sa cabalette conclusive qui promet une fin violente aux forces ennemies. Ce qui importe le plus ici c’est que les deux parties de la scène sont intimement liées par des idées rythmiques et mélodiques partagées : en ce sens, elles font partie du même message musical, chacune trouvant dans la proximité de l’autre l’occasion de se raffermir. Une fois encore, le chœur semble devenir un élément du noyau expressif de l’opéra.

Toutefois, la nouveauté de *Nabucco* ne saurait se limiter à des numéros qui font appel au chœur, même si ces moments sont très impressionnants. Aucun compositeur de cette époque n’aurait pu remporter un succès aussi remarquable que Verdi sans apporter

des nouveautés importantes dans l’écriture pour la voix soliste, voix qui restait au cœur de la façon dont l’opéra se transmettait à ses auditoires. Le fait que Verdi ait fait preuve aussi, dès le début de sa carrière, d’une extrême originalité à cet égard a été relégué au second plan par l’importance accordée aux éléments choraux; mais elle mérite qu’on s’y attarde. On en trouve un exemple typique dans le nouveau traitement du personnage d’Abigaille que l’on trouve dans *Nabucco*, rôle créé apparemment pour la soprano allemande Sophie Loewe, mais finalement interprété à la création par Giuseppina Strepponi, qui allait devenir peu après la compagne du compositeur pendant toute sa vie. Surtout inspiré par les compétences spécifiques de Loewe (Strepponi n’est arrivée qu’assez tard dans cette affaire), Verdi inventa dans le rôle d’Abigaille un nouveau type de soprano dramatique italienne.

Le récitatif accompagné qui marque l’entrée en scène d’Abigaille à l’acte I affirme d’emblée son caractère vocal inhabituel, qui requiert puissance dans le registre grave, agilité dans l’aigu et une solide présence dramatique dans l’ensemble de l’ouvrage. Dans le contexte des normes définies par Donizetti qui étaient en vigueur en 1842, selon lesquelles on avait tendance à placer les sopranos dans la catégorie

des “femmes languissantes” et on appréciait avant tout leur lyrisme délicat et leurs envolées de coloratura extravagantes (Lucia di Lammermoor est l’exemple classique), ces caractéristiques sortaient de l’ordinaire. Toutefois, l’aria de grande envergure que Verdi a écrite pour Abigaille au début de l’acte II est encore plus importante. Par ses apparences formelles, ce numéro semble vraiment s’inscrire dans les lignes fixées par Donizetti, avec une structure conventionnelle en plusieurs parties allant du mouvement lent lyrique à la cabalette plus énergique. Mais, sur le plan interne, il y a des changements déterminants. Après un récitatif intense, les pensées d’Abigaille se tournent vers l’amour dans le mouvement lent, “Anch’io dischiuso un giorno” (“Aussi, moi, aux jours passés”). Il est vrai qu’il est très orné, chaque phrase de deux mesures étant conclue par une fioriture vocale; mais, ce qui est typique de Verdi c’est la manière stricte dont sont contenus les ornements, ce qui donne à leur prolifération au point culminant de cet air une énergie fascinante et une impression de mouvement en avant. Autrement dit, on ne retrouve aucunement cette tendance propre à Donizetti qui consiste à sombrer dans des périodes rythmiques toujours plus lâches

au fur et à mesure que l’aria progresse et devient plus fleurie. La cabalette, “Salgo già del trono aurato” (“Je monte déjà du trône doré”) est encore plus radicale à cet égard. Elle revient au caractère énergique du récitatif et, maintenant dans un contexte beaucoup plus dynamique, réussit une fois encore à contrôler le côté ornemental de la musique. Loin de “se dissoudre” dans la virtuosité vocale à la fin, cette aria continue, en d’autres termes, à subordonner l’ornementation, qu’elle contient au sein de périodes strictement contrôlées. De tels exemples, que l’on pourrait facilement multiplier, démontrent au moins en partie d’où provient cette énergie si caractéristique des premiers opéras de Verdi : par le biais d’un resserrement de la forme associé à une intensification du contenu expressif.

On pourrait aussi trouver dans les autres principaux rôles vocaux de *Nabucco* les changements de caractère vocal qui surviennent entre Abigaille et Lucia : dans toutes les tessitures, la fermeté et le volume même commencent à faire une avancée dans la flexibilité vocale, la nouvelle immédiateté et le “réalisme” du style de jeu allant de pair avec une tendance à se livrer toujours plus intensément à une déclamation véhémement plutôt qu’à un *bel canto* sans heurts. Cela



ressort de façon très manifeste dans l'émergence du baryton "verdien", dont Nabucco est le premier exemple. Dès sa première entrée, Nabucco se caractérise par une tessiture élevée, une tendance à la déclamation intense et une absence relative d'écriture ornementale : un animal très différent du mélodieux "basso cantante" (basse chantante) à la mode vingt ans plus tôt. Le finale de la deuxième partie est probablement le plus grand moment de Nabucco à cet égard. Le mouvement lent du finale, "S'appressan gl'istanti" ("L'heure de la colère fatale s'approche") ne tire pas son effet d'une caractérisation individuelle (chacun des principaux rôles chante la même mélodie) mais d'une augmentation inexorable de la complexité de la texture et de la puissance sonore. Mais ensuite Nabucco fait face à la foule et se déclare non seulement son roi mais son Dieu. La foudre s'abat sur lui pour ce blasphème et la foule murmure une réponse consternée. Les conventions lyriques italiennes auraient alors suggéré un mouvement conclusif rapide; mais Verdi a plutôt opté pour une scène de folie pour Nabucco. Dans le passé, de telles scènes étaient généralement l'apanage des sopranos (Lucia en constitue à nouveau l'exemple classique); mais Verdi

exploite la nouvelle gamme émotionnelle de la voix masculine. Dans une merveilleuse scène, le roi frappé oscille d'un air égaré entre deux modes très différents: la déclamation furieuse lorsqu'il s'insurge contre son destin, d'une part; mais ensuite, dans une transition soudaine et répétée, c'est un aspect beaucoup plus doux qui survient lorsqu'il s'interroge sur sa vulnérabilité avant de finir par s'évanouir.

Un mois après la mort de Verdi en 1901, alors que le monde entier le considérait comme le plus grand Italien de l'époque, une procession solennelle traversa Milan accompagnée par un cortège funèbre de plusieurs centaines de milliers de personnes qui assistèrent au transfert de ses cendres à leur dernier lieu de repos, la Casa di Riposo, maison de retraite pour musiciens qu'il avait fondée dans un élan philanthropique au cours des dernières années de sa vie. Le départ de la procession fut accompagné par le chœur et l'orchestre de la Scala, qui poussèrent la foule à chanter "Va pensiero". Le fait que ce chœur de *Nabucco*, écrit quelque soixante ans plus tôt, put exprimer les sentiments des Italiens de l'époque pour leur héros disparu montra à quel point la musique de Verdi avait été assimilée dans la conscience nationale. Mais tout ceci s'est déroulé il y a un siècle.

Nabucco ne devrait pas rester éternellement immergé dans ces moments de nostalgie, même si les doux contours de "Va, pensiero" encourageront toujours de telles attitudes. Il y a beaucoup d'autres éléments caractéristiques de l'opéra, beaucoup d'autres aspects par lesquels il annonce l'émergence d'une nouvelle présence vitale sur la scène lyrique italienne: une voix qui allait se développer de façon remarquable au cours des quarante années suivantes mais qui allait toujours conserver quelque chose de cette énergie et de cette force que *Nabucco* proclame avant tant d'insistance.

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Synopsis

COMPACT DISC ONE

[1] Ouverture

Première partie: Jérusalem

À l'intérieur du Temple de Salomon, à Jérusalem

[2] – [6] Les prêtres et le peuple de Jérusalem se lamentent sur la conquête de leur pays par les armées babyloniennes sous la conduite de Nabucco et de sa fille aînée supposée, Abigaille. Les Juifs ont capturé l'autre fille de Nabucco, Fenena, et la gardent en otage.

[7] Lorsque Ismaël et Fenena sont seuls dans le temple, on apprend qu'ils s'aiment. [8] Abigaille entre, suivie de soldats babyloniens déguisés en Hébreux. [9] – [11] Abigaille est aussi tombée amoureuse d'Ismaël au cours de la captivité de ce dernier à Babylone et lui jette alors sa victoire à la face. Zaccharie entre en courant [12] – [13] et Nabucco se rend aux portes du temple. [14] Zaccharie menace de tuer Fenena, mais Ismaël la sauve. [15] Nabucco ordonne immédiatement la destruction du temple.

Deuxième partie: L'impie

Les appartements du Palais royal à Babylone

[16] – [17] Abigaille, tourmentée par son amour sans retour pour Ismaël, découvre qu'elle est la fille d'esclaves. [18] Le Grand-Prêtre de Baal survient et annonce que Fenena a libéré les Israélites. Il dit avoir déjà commencé à répandre la rumeur selon laquelle Nabucco aurait été tué au combat [19] et Abigaille décide d'assumer elle-même le pouvoir.

Une salle du palais

[20] – [23] Les Juifs maudissent Ismaël pour avoir trahi leur cause.

[24] – [26] Abigaille est proclamée reine et est sur le point de se couronner elle-même lorsque



apparaît Nabucco qui lui arrache la couronne. ^[27] Nabucco se tourne vers la foule et se déclare non seulement roi, mais Dieu. Un coup de tonnerre éclate et une force surnaturelle arrache la couronne de son front. ^[28] Nabucco semble devenu fou. Abigaille s'empare de la couronne et la place sur sa propre tête.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Troisième partie: La prophétie

Dans les jardins suspendus de Babylone

^[1] Abigaille victorieuse a été couronnée reine d'Assyrie. ^[2] Nabucco est introduit devant elle ^[3] et Abigaille l'amène par la ruse à signer un décret condamnant à mort tous les Hébreux. ^[4] – ^[5] Il réalise trop tard qu'il a été dupé et qu'il a condamné à mort sa propre fille. ^[6] Il implore en vain Abigaille de sauver Fenena.

Les rives de l'Euphrate

^[7] Les esclaves hébreux déplorent leur captivité dans un chœur qui traduit leur désir nostalgique de retrouver leur patrie. ^[8] – ^[9] Zacharie, le grand-prêtre, prophétise la chute de Babylone.

Quatrième partie: L'idole brisée

Les appartements royaux

^[10] Nabucco, prisonnier dans son propre palais,

entend une marche funèbre et voit sa fille Fenena conduite à son exécution. ^[11] Il prie Jéhovah, le Dieu d'Israël, ^[12] et recouvre son équilibre mental; Adballo survient avec une bande de soldats pour libérer son maître. ^[13] Ils se précipitent dehors pour sauver Fenena.

Les jardins suspendus

^[14] – ^[16] Alors que Fenena et les Israélites sont conduits vers la mort, Nabucco apparaît et la statue du dieu tombe en ruines. ^[17] Nabucco leur demande à tous de ne louer que le seul Dieu véritable, Jéhovah. ^[18] Abigaille (nous l'apprenons) a avalé un poison et, au moment de mourir, elle implore Dieu de lui accorder Son pardon.

Traduction: Marie-Stella Pâris

Alan Opie (Nabucco) se produit souvent au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden, à l'English National Opera, au Metropolitan Opera de New York, à la Scala de Milan, à l'Opéra d'État de Bavière à Munich, à l'Opéra d'État de Vienne et au Festival de Glyndebourne. Parmi les rôles auxquels il s'est le plus étroitement identifié figurent Beckmesser dans *Les Maîtres chanteurs de Nuremberg*, qu'il a chanté à Amsterdam,

Bayreuth, Munich, Turin, Vienne, Berlin (Staatsoper) et avec l'Orchestre symphonique de Chicago sous la direction de Solti; Balstrode dans *Peter Grimes* (Festival Saito Kinen au Japon, Opéra national de Paris-Bastille, Vienne, Metropolitan Opera de New York, English National Opera, Teatro Comunale de Florence et Covent Garden); Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) au Metropolitan Opera, à Munich, Covent Garden, Cagliari, Tokyo, Sumida et Pékin; Germont père dans *La traviata* (Covent Garden, English National Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin); Falstaff (English National Opera et Opéra de Norvège); le Forestier dans *La Petite Renarde rusée* (English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Festival de Spoleto et Scala) ainsi que Rigoletto (English National et Canadian Opera à Toronto).

Il a aussi créé *Outis* de Berio, dont il a chanté le rôle-titre à la Scala de Milan et au Châtelet à Paris, *Le Choix de Sophie* de Maw à Covent Garden sous la direction de Rattle et *Madame Mao* de Sheng au Festival de Santa Fe.

Il a participé à une vingtaine d'enregistrements intégraux d'opéras pour Chandos dans lesquels il a incarné les rôles du Comte di Luna (*Il trovatore*), Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Don

Carlo (*Ernani*), Balstrode (*Peter Grimes*) et Figaro (*Le Barbier de Séville*). Il a remporté deux Grammys et sa prestation dans le rôle de Falstaff à l'English National Opera lui a valu une nomination à l'Olivier Award pour ses "remarquables réalisations dans le domaine de l'opéra".

Née à Birmingham, dans l'Alabama, **Susan Patterson** (Abigaille) est entrée à Samford University pour y travailler le piano, mais a été encouragée à ajouter des études vocales à sa formation. Elle a obtenu sa maîtrise à l'Université d'État de Floride et a travaillé le chant avec Virginia Zeani à l'Université d'Indiana. Elle a reçu le titre d'Adler Fellow à l'Opéra de San Francisco pour la saison 1986/1987 avant de se faire un nom dans le monde de l'opéra en chantant *La traviata* dans cet établissement ainsi qu'au Welsh National Opera. Depuis lors, elle a interprété ce rôle plus de cent cinquante fois.

Susan Patterson a remporté un immense succès dans les rôles de Margarita et Helena du *Mefistofele* de Boito et dans *Rusalka* de Dvořák, dans une nouvelle production d'*Ernani* au Reisopera des Pays-Bas, dans Chimène (*Le Cid*), Mme de Tourvel (*Les Liaisons dangereuses*) et *Tosca* à l'Opéra de Washington,



dans Mimì (*La Bohème*) et *Aida* à l'Opéra de Baltimore, ainsi que dans *Manon Lescaut* au Festival américain de Spoleto. Elle a aussi chanté Donna Anna et les trois héroïnes des *Contes d'Hoffmann* à l'Opéra de Philadelphie ainsi que Magda (*La Rondine*) à l'Opéra-Théâtre de Saint Louis.

Elle s'est produite fréquemment à l'Opéra de San Francisco dans des rôles comme Angelica (*Orlando furioso* de Vivaldi), Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*), Constanze (*L'Enlèvement au sérail*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) et Helena (*Le Songe d'une nuit d'été*). En Europe, elle a chanté à la Scala de Milan dans *Lodoïska* de Cherubini, à l'Opéra néerlandais dans *Le Comte Ory* et *Mitridate*, à Aix-en-Provence où elle a incarné Constanze, ainsi qu'à l'Opéra de Cologne et à l'Opéra-Comique à Paris dans *L'Occasion fait le larron*.

Dans la série Opera in English de Chandos, elle a enregistré les rôles d'Amelia (*Un bal masqué*), Elvira (*Ernani*) et Electra dans *Idoménée*. Ses autres enregistrements comprennent *Le Comte Ory* et *Le Mariage secret*.

Alastair Miles (Zaccaria) est reconnu dans le monde entier comme l'une des grandes voix de basse. Il a chanté au Metropolitan Opéra

de New York (Giorgio dans *Les Puritains* et Raimondo dans *Lucia di Lammermoor*), à l'Opéra national de Paris-Bastille (Raimondo), à Vienne (Philippe II dans *Don Carlos*, Zaccaria dans *Nabucco*, le Cardinal Brogni dans *La Juive* de Halévy, De Silva dans *Ernani* et Giorgio), à l'Opéra d'État de Bavière à Munich (rôle-titre de *Saul*), à San Francisco (Giorgio, Raimondo et Basilio dans *Le Barbier de Séville*), à Amsterdam (Figaro dans *Les Noces de Figaro*), au Teatro Real de Madrid (Philippe II et Raimondo), à Palerme (Walter dans *Luisa Miller*), à Séville (Méphisto dans *Faust*), à l'English National Opera (le rôle-titre du *Mefistofele* de Boito, Zaccaria, De Silva et Ford dans *Sir John in Love*), ainsi qu'au Royal Opera de Covent Garden (Rodolfo dans *La Somnambule*, Elmiro dans *Otello*, Frère Laurent dans *Roméo et Juliette*, Banquo dans *Macbeth*, et des versions de concert du *Dom Sébastien* de Donizetti, également enregistrées par Opera Rara). Il a aussi incarné Méphistophélès dans *La Damnation de Faust* en concert avec l'Orchestre symphonique de Londres sous la direction de Sir Colin Davis à Londres et à New York.

Il mène une très brillante carrière de concertiste qui l'a conduit dans le monde entier pour chanter avec des chefs d'orchestre

comme Giulini, Mehta, Muti, Chung, Masur, Gergiev, Gardiner, Sir Colin Davis et avec les plus prestigieux orchestres de la planète. Sa discographie dépasse à ce jour la cinquantaine d'enregistrements, notamment *Elias* de Mendelssohn, le Requiem de Verdi, *Saul et Agrippina* de Haendel. Dans la série *Opera in English* de Chandos, il a enregistré les rôles de Méphisto (*Faust*), Ramfis (*Aida*), Colline (*La Bohème*) ainsi qu'un disque de grands airs d'opéra.

Jane Irwin (Fenena) a fait ses études à l'Université du Lancaster et au Royal Northern College of Music, où elle a bénéficié d'une bourse de la Peter Moores Foundation. Parmi les nombreux prix qu'elle a remportés figurent le prix de chant du Concours international d'exécution musicale de Genève en 1993 et le Prix Decca Kathleen Ferrier en 1991.

En 1995, elle a fait ses débuts au Royal Opera House de Covent Garden où elle a chanté depuis Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*). Au Scottish Opera, elle a chanté Suzuki, Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Waltraute (*Le Crépuscule des dieux*), Fatima (*Obéron* de Weber) et Thea (*The Knot Garden* de Tippett). A l'English National Opera, elle a interprété Brangäne (*Tristan et Isolde*).

Au concert et en récital, Jane Irwin s'est produite régulièrement en Grande-Bretagne, en Europe et aux États-Unis, faisant ses débuts à Carnegie Hall avec l'Orchestre symphonique de Pittsburgh sous la direction de Mariss Jansons. Elle a chanté les *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* de Mahler aux Proms de la BBC et au Festival de Berlin, *Lucrezia* de Haendel et la *Messe du couronnement* de Mozart avec l'Orchestre symphonique de San Francisco, la *Missa solemnis* de Beethoven avec l'Orchestre symphonique de Berlin, *Le Chant de la terre* de Mahler avec le Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin et avec l'Orchestre philharmonique de la BBC.

Elle s'est produite avec l'Orchestre de Paris, l'Orchestre philharmonique de Rotterdam, l'Orchestre symphonique de Seattle, l'Orchestre de chambre suédois, l'Orchestre national d'Espagne, l'Orchestre symphonique de la radio finlandaise, l'Académie Sainte-Cécile de Rome et a donné des récitals au Châtelet, à Paris, ainsi qu'à Londres, Genève, Aix-en-Provence et au Japon.

Le jeune ténor italo-américain Leonardo Capalbo (Ismaele) est déjà couvert de louanges par la critique internationale. Il a fait ses études à la Juilliard School of Music de New York, à la



Music Academy of the West à Santa Barbara, en Californie, et à l'Académie musicale de Villecroze en France. Parmi les rôles qu'il a chantés figurent Dino Corelli (*A Wedding* de Bolcom), Fadinard (*Il cappello di paglia di Firenze* de Rota), Lenski (*Eugène Onéguine*) et Rodolfo (*La Bohème*), ainsi que Macduff (*Macbeth*) à l'Opera Holland Park.

Leonardo Capalbo a fait ses débuts européens à l'opéra en 2004 dans *Paco de La Vie brève* de Manuel de Falla à l'Opera North, où il a été réinvité pour y chanter Luigi (*Il tabarro*), Ismaele (*Nabucco*), Narraboth (*Salomé*) et Juan (*Der Kuhhandel* de Kurt Weill). Il s'est aussi produit à l'Opéra d'Israël (Alfredo dans *La traviata*).

Camilla Roberts (Anna) est née à Wrexham. Diplômée de la Guildhall School of Music and Drama, elle a ensuite suivi le Guildhall Opera Course, étudiant avec Laura Sarti, grâce au mécénat de l'Arts Council du Pays de Galles et du Countess of Munster Trust. Le Welsh National Opera lui a permis de compléter ses études par la suite au London's National Opera Studio. En juin 2004, Camilla Roberts a remporté la Welsh Singers Competition.

En 2003, elle a intégré la troupe du Welsh National Opera comme artiste associée. Elle y a

tenu des rôles comme Micäela (*Carmen*), Diane (*Iphigénie en Tauride*) et Laura (*Yolantha*). Ses autres engagements récents lui ont permis de chanter Anna (*Nabucco*) à l'Opera North, Tatiana (*Eugène Onéguine*) à l'Opera Holland Park et Anna (*Le villi*) à l'Opéra de Chelsea.

Camilla Roberts s'est produite au Queen Elizabeth Hall, à St John's Smith Square et à St David's Hall. Elle a fait des tournées en Australie et en Nouvelle-Zélande et son répertoire de concert comprend le *Requiem* de Verdi ainsi que la *Sea Symphony* de Vaughan Williams. Parmi ses enregistrements figure un CD d'airs viennois avec le Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Dean Robinson (Gran Sacerdote) est né et a fait ses études en Australie avant de s'installer au Royaume-Uni pour poursuivre sa formation vocale au Royal Northern College of Music de Manchester. Il y a reçu plusieurs prix et distinctions honorifiques, notamment le prix d'opéra Robin Kaye et plusieurs distinctions de la Peter Moores Foundation.

Parmi ses engagements lyriques figurent Pluto (*Orfeo*), Passauf lors de la création mondiale de *Dr Ox's Experiment* et Colline (*La Bohème*) à l'English National Opera, Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*) et Sarastro (*La Flûte*

enchantée) au Scottish Opera, Colline, M. Ratcliffe (*Billy Budd*) et Angelotti (*Tosca*) au Welsh National Opera. Au Royal Opera, il a interprété un certain nombre de seconds rôles. Parmi ses enregistrements, on peut citer Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) chez Chandos Records et Duca d'Argile (*Prigione d'Edimburgo*) chez Opera Rara.

Paul Wade (Abdullah) est né à Huddersfield, où il a fait ses études avant d'aller au Royal College of Music de Londres. Il est entré à l'English Opera Group où il a chanté beaucoup d'opéras de Britten et avec lequel il est parti en tournée en Australie, où il a interprété les *Church Parables*.

Il a chanté dans tous les grands festivals européens, à l'Opéra de San Francisco, à Covent Garden, au Welsh National Opera et a fait ses débuts à l'English National Opera dans le rôle de Monostatos (*La Flûte enchantée*). Il est entré dans la troupe d'Opera North dès sa création et y a interprété plus de quarante rôles, notamment le Narrateur (*L'Opéra de quat'sous*), le Dancaïre (*Carmen*), M. Léonard (*Masquarade*), Frère Paul (*La Duègne*, qu'il a également enregistré chez Chandos), Monostatos, Bardolph (*Falstaff*), Guillot de Morfontaine (*Manon*) et très

récemment Isacco (*La Pie voleuse*), avant de quitter cette troupe en 2004. Il s'est maintenant affirmé comme un professeur de chant et répétiteur vocal très recherché.

Opera North est la compagnie lyrique nationale anglaise basée dans le nord du pays et l'une des grandes institutions artistiques d'Europe. La compagnie travaille au plus haut niveau et cherche à passionner, stimuler et divertir. Ses tournées l'entraînent non seulement dans le nord de l'Angleterre et à Londres mais aussi dans les théâtres européens comme ceux de Prague ou Barcelone; Opera North participe aux grands festivals internationaux comme Edimbourg et Ravenne. Son approche novatrice de la programmation et de l'interprétation lui a valu de remporter de nombreux prix prestigieux, dont quatre pour sa saison de 2004 intitulée *Eight Little Greats* (Royal Philharmonic Society Opera and Music Theatre Award, The South Bank Show Opera Award, the TMA Theatre Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, the Manchester Evening News Theatre Award for Opera).

Opera North est une organisation pleine de vie et d'énergie qui n'hésite pas à remettre en question une vision conventionnelle de l'opéra. Insufflant une vie nouvelle aux grands



classiques de l'opéra, la compagnie se fait aussi le défenseur d'œuvres moins connues et du théâtre musical. Opera North collabore avec des artistes et des companies issus de médias les plus divers, comme le cinéma et les arts plastiques. Son Choeur et son Orchestre fort talentueux se produisent également indépendamment et cherchent sans cesse à se renouveler musicalement parlant. Opera North Education est un organisme fort estimé dans le pays pour son travail éducatif dans le domaine artistique, utilisant l'opéra pour inspirer et développer la création artistique dans l'ensemble de la communauté.

Après avoir étudié avec Sergiu Celibidache, **David Parry** commença sa carrière comme assistant de Sir John Pritchard. Il fit ses débuts avec l'English Music Theatre avant de devenir l'un des chefs d'orchestre au Städtische Bühnen à Dortmund et à Opera North. Directeur musical d'Opera 80 de 1983 à 1987, il est directeur musical d'Almeida Opera depuis sa fondation en 1992.

Sa carrière, nationale et internationale, est extrêmement remplie, aussi bien sur la scène lyrique qu'en concert. Il a dirigé plusieurs productions de l'English National Opera et de l'Opera North et collabore régulièrement avec le Philharmonia Orchestra et le London

Philharmonic Orchestra. C'est avec *Così fan tutte* qu'il fit ses débuts au Festival de Glyndebourne en 1996, une scène qu'il retrouva en 1998 pour diriger la création mondiale de *Flight* de Jonathan Dove.

Il séjourne fréquemment en Espagne où il a dirigé en concert la plupart des grands orchestres espagnols. C'est lui qui dirigea la première espagnole de *Peter Grimes* à Madrid et en 1996 la première production espagnole de *The Rake's Progress*. Il a dirigé en Allemagne, en Suisse, aux Pays-Bas, au Festival de Pesaro en Italie, au Festival international de Hong-Kong, au Japon pour une tournée de *Carmen* et au Mexique avec l'Orchestre symphonique d'UNAM. Il a récemment dirigé plusieurs nouvelles productions dont *Fidelio* au Festival de Nouvelle-Zélande, *Lucia di Lammermoor* avec le New Israeli Opera et *Don Giovanni* à l'Opéra d'état de Hannover.

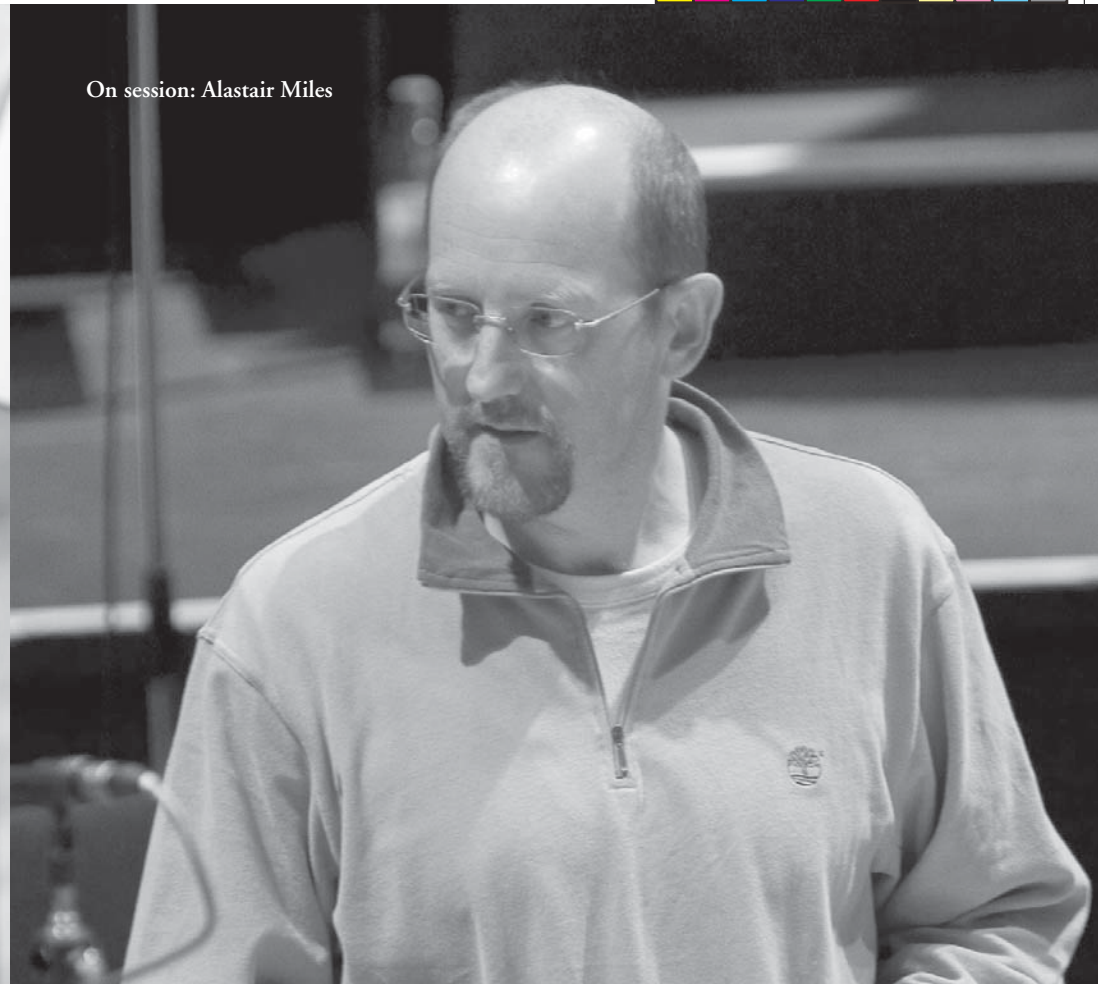
En studio, il a participé entre autres à la production de la BBC Television de *Der Vampyr* de Marschner, dirigeant aussi vingt-huit intégrales d'opéras financées par la Peter Moores Foundation. Plusieurs de ces intégrales furent enregistrées pour Opera Rara et primées, *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* de Donizetti recevant en Belgique le Prix Cecilia. Pour Chandos, David Parry a dirigé une série d'enregistrements d'airs

d'opéra (avec Sir Thomas Allen, Bruce Ford, Alan Opie, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Barry Banks, Della Jones et Andrew Shore) de même que *Fidelio*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *A Masked Ball*, *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *The Thieving Magpie*,

Don Giovanni, *Don Pasquale*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Ernani*, *Il trovatore*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *La bohème*, *Turandot*, l'enregistrement primé de *Tosca* et des extraits de *Der Rosenkavalier*, tous ces enregistrements étant réalisés en collaboration avec la Peter Moores Foundation.



On session: David Parry



On session: Alastair Miles





La nuova voce dell'opera italiana

Nabucco, allestito per la prima volta al Teatro alla Scala di Milano il 9 marzo 1842, fu un evento cruciale non solo nella carriera di Verdi, ma in tutta la sua vita. Sebbene preceduto da altre due opere – la prima (*Oberto, Conte di San Bonifacio*) ebbe un moderato successo; la seconda (*Un giorno di regno*) si rivelò invece un fallimento disastroso – *Nabucco* fu, secondo quanto tenne a ricordare trent'anni dopo nelle sue memorie lo stesso compositore, “un vero inizio”: il momento in cui Verdi trovò la sua vera voce e iniziò a comunicare la sua visione, unica e originale, dell'opera italiana. Naturalmente, le sue memorie – prodotte quando il compositore era già una figura nota a livello internazionale e diffuse ampiamente dai giornalisti che ora gli si raccoglievano attorno e lo tartassavano con richieste di interviste – avevano in gran parte un fine ben preciso. Per Verdi era importante, in età avanzata, dare un'immagine di sé stesso come di un “uomo che si è fatto da sé”: una personalità diventata celebre in seguito a un periodo di relativa oscurità e di un'intensa lotta interiore. Inoltre, desiderava trarre

vantaggio anche dallo status iconico che l'inno più famoso del *Nabucco*, il coro degli schiavi ebrei “Va, pensiero”, stava iniziando ad acquisire in un'Italia da poco unita e alla ricerca affannosa di monumenti nazionali e di altro materiale simbolico. Per questo, le storie che raccontava sul *Nabucco* si riferivano costantemente a una crisi compositiva che avrebbe fatto seguito a *Un giorno di regno*, un periodo in cui Verdi rifiutò qualsiasi offerta di lavoro. Il libretto dell'opera gli fu mostrato, però, proprio quando si trovava nel colmo della disperazione e fu allora che le parole di “Va, pensiero” gli apparvero in modo quasi magico, riconducendolo verso la composizione attraverso l'idea di un coro. Il resto, si sa, appartiene ormai alla storia.

Tuttavia, la realtà non era così semplice. Dopo *Un giorno di regno* ci fu davvero una sorta di vuoto nella carriera compositiva di Verdi, ma si trattò di un vuoto occupato in parte da un revival di *Oberto*. E fu lo stesso Verdi a incoraggiarlo con entusiasmo, offrendo alcuni pezzi nuovi e importanti per solisti famosi. Per di più, all'arrivo del *Nabucco*, non esistono prove sul fatto che

“Va, pensiero” fosse considerato un pezzo particolarmente apprezzato dal pubblico dei primi allestimenti o che fosse un momento musicale determinante per Verdi. D'altra parte, non esistono invece dubbi sul fatto che *Nabucco* fu in effetti un momento cruciale. In termini professionali, riuscì a piazzare fermamente Verdi su un gradino più alto, in particolare quando fu riproposto alla Scala nella stagione autunnale del 1842, proseguendo per un numero record di 57 spettacoli. Verdi non avrebbe mai più avuto incertezze sulla provenienza di future commissioni, particolarmente quando l'opera iniziò a circolare con rapidità in tutta Italia, riscontrando un livello di successo solitamente paragonabile a quello di Milano. Quindi, nonostante la notevole diffidenza riguardo a ciò che *Nabucco* diventò sul finire del diciannovesimo secolo, la domanda importante è la seguente: cosa portò il pubblico nel 1842 ad ascoltare quest'opera? Cosa aveva di nuovo e di particolare la personalità musicale di Verdi?

Una risposta è offerta nella prima parte dell'opera, che ha luogo all'interno del tempio di Solomone. L'esercito babilonese è arrivato a Gerusalemme ed è stazionato alle porte del tempio. Il popolo israeliano lamenta la sua triste sorte nel coro d'apertura, ma il profeta

Zaccaria li rincuora, infondendo in loro un nuovo spirito bellicoso. Sebbene l'opera italiana di quel periodo iniziasse quasi sempre con un coro di apertura, questo è simile a pochi. Le generazioni precedenti avevano ascoltato cortigiani chiacchieroni e vassalli adulatori in abbondanza, ma qui si assiste a un canovaccio ben più grandioso. Il coro ricava gran parte del suo effetto dall'alternarsi di gruppi contrastanti: un popolo terrorizzato, un gruppo di Leviti in preghiera, un altro gruppo di vergini supplicanti; tutti sono presentati con un'immediatezza e una schiettezza che all'epoca deve essere sembrata alquanto brutale. Egualmente importante è, tuttavia, la risposta di Zaccaria che, nonostante sia proposta nel solito stile di un'aria in due movimenti, si avvicina di più a un dinamico dialogo con le masse che lo circondano. In entrambi i movimenti, il coro si intramette in maniera risoluta nel suo essere, invadendo lo spazio di Zaccaria, assumendo il controllo della sua melodia e rendendola parte del proprio mondo espressivo.

Più avanti nell'opera, questa sensazione di una nuova “voce” corale viene sviluppata ulteriormente, per esempio in “Coro e Profezia”, nella terza Parte, che mostra come Verdi fosse in grado di unire elementi corali



e solistici in unità di scena avvincenti. La scrittura corale di “Va, pensiero”, che dà inizio alla scena, è altamente originale e sembra di nuovo imporre un nuovo status per le masse (con preveggenza Rossini lo definì “non tanto un coro quanto una grande aria cantata da soprani, contralti, tenori e bassi”); ma la sua vena gentile e nostalgica è poi duramente contrastata dall’energica profezia di Zaccaria che ne fa seguito, e in particolare dalla sua cabaletta di chiusura, in cui alle forze nemiche viene promesso un destino violento. Qui, però, l’aspetto più importante è dato dall’intimo collegamento delle due parti della scena attraverso idee ritmiche e melodiche condivise: fanno, in questo senso, parte dello stesso messaggio musicale, ognuna guadagnando forza dalla sua vicinanza con l’altra. Di nuovo, il coro sembra diventare parte del centro espressivo dell’opera.

Tuttavia, la novità del *Nabucco* non può essere limitata a frasi in cui il coro è presente, indipendentemente dall’incredibile qualità di questi momenti. Nessun compositore di questo periodo avrebbe potuto riscontrare il grande successo di Verdi senza comporre in maniera nuova e all’avanguardia per la voce solista, che rimaneva al centro del modo di comunicare dell’opera al suo pubblico. Il

fatto che in questo Verdi era stato, dall’inizio della sua carriera, incredibilmente originale risulta spesso oscurato dalla concentrazione sugli elementi corali, e ora merita qualche riflessione. Un ottimo esempio ne è il suo inedito trattamento del personaggio di Abigail nel *Nabucco*, un ruolo che pare fosse stato creato per il soprato tedesco Sophie Loewe, e che fu invece interpretato alla prima da Giuseppina Strepponi, destinata a diventare presto la compagna del compositore, rimanendolo per tutta la vita. Inspirato soprattutto dal particolare talento della Loewe (Strepponi apparve più tardi sulla scena), Verdi inventò in Abigail un nuovo tipo di soprano drammatico italiano.

Il recitativo accompagnato che introduce Abigail nell’Atto I impone immediatamente il suo insolito carattere vocale, che richiede potenza nel registro più basso, agilità sul pentagramma e una presenza fortemente drammatica dal principio alla fine. Nel contesto delle norme donizettiane, in vigore nel 1842 e in base alle quali i soprani tendevano a essere posti nella categoria di “donne deperite”, ed erano soprattutto apprezzati per il loro liricismo delicato e voli di una coloratura stravagante (Lucia di Lammermoor ne è un caso classico), queste

erano caratteristiche inusuali. Cosa ancora più importante, però, è l’aria completa che Verdi compose per Abigail all’inizio dell’Atto II. Nella sua esteriorità formale, questa frase sembra attenersi più o meno alle direttive donizettiane, con un formato a movimento multiplo convenzionale, spostandosi da un movimento lirico lento a una cabaletta più energetica. Ma all’interno si verificano cambiamenti decisivi. Dopo un intenso recitativo, i pensieri di Abigail si volgono all’amore in “Anch’io dischiuso un giorno”, un movimento lento notevolmente adornato con fioriture vocali aggiunte al termine di ognuna delle frasi a due battute. Ma gli ornamenti sono, nel caso tipico di Verdi, strettamente contenuti, conferendo loro, al punto culminante, un’energia irresistibile e un senso di movimento in progresso. Non vi è, in altre parole, nulla della tendenza donizettiana a spostarsi in periodi ritmici ancora più lenti man mano che l’aria procede e diventa più fiorita. La cabaletta “Salgo già del trono aurato” è ancora più radicale da questo punto di vista. Ritorna al tono vigoroso del recitativo e, ora in un contesto molto più dinamico, di nuovo riesce a controllare l’aspetto ornamentale della musica. Anziché “dissolversi” alla fine in una virtuosità vocale, l’aria continua a

subordinare l’abbellimento, limitandolo in periodi strettamente controllati. Tali esempi, che potrebbero essere facilmente moltiplicati, dimostrano almeno in parte come quell’energia così tipica delle prime opere di Verdi venisse creata: attraverso un consolidamento della forma accompagnato a un’intensificazione del contenuto espressivo.

I cambiamenti nel carattere vocale tra Abigail e Lucia possono essere ritrovati anche in altri protagonisti vocali del *Nabucco*: in tutte le estensioni, robustezza e volume iniziarono a far incursione nella flessibilità della voce, mentre la nuova immediatezza e il “realismo” nello stile della recitazione si associavano a una tendenza ad abbandonarsi ancora più intensamente in un’ardente declamazione, piuttosto che in un *bel canto*. Ciò può essere verificato soprattutto nell’emergere del baritono “verdiano”, di cui quest’opera è il primo esempio. Nabucco è caratterizzato, già dalla sua entrata, da un’alta tessitura, una tendenza verso la declamazione intensa e un’assenza relativa di composizione ornamentale: molto diverso dal soave “basso cantante” di venti anni prima. Da questo punto di vista, il finale dell’Atto II è probabilmente il momento più importante del Nabucco. Il movimento lento



del finale, “S’appressan gl’istanti”, ottiene il suo effetto non tanto dalla caratterizzazione individuale (ognuno dei personaggi canta la stessa melodia) quanto piuttosto dall’aumento inesorabile in fatto di complessità strutturale acustica. Ma poi Nabucco affronta la folla e si dichiara non solo il loro re ma anche il loro Dio. Una blasfemia punita da un fulmine che lo colpisce, tra i mormorii scioccati della folla. La convenzione operistica italiana avrebbe poi suggerito un veloce movimento conclusivo; invece Verdi optò per una scena di pazzia per Nabucco. Scene simili erano state, in passato, dominio tipico dei soprani (Lucia ne è di nuovo un caso classico), ma Verdi sfrutta la nuova estensione emotiva della voce maschile. In una scena meravigliosa, il re colpito si muove distrattamente tra due modalità molto diverse: da un lato, una furiosa declamazione, che lo porta a inveire contro il suo destino; ma poi, in una transizione improvvisa e ripetuta, ecco emergere un lato molto più soave, che lo porta ad analizzare la sua vulnerabilità e, finalmente, a svanire.

Un mese dopo la scomparsa di Verdi, nel 1901, in un periodo in cui era considerato universalmente come il più grande italiano vivente, una solenne processione di centinaia di migliaia di persone attraversò Milano

accompagnando le sue spoglie nella Casa di Riposo, la residenza per musicisti in pensione che il compositore aveva costruito in tarda età come monumento filantropico. L’inizio della processione fu segnato dall’orchestra e dal coro della Scala, che incoraggiò la folla a cantare “Va, pensiero”. E il fatto che questo coro, composto circa sessant’anni prima, fosse in grado di esprimere il sentimento degli italiani contemporanei per la morte del loro eroe dimostrò fino a che livello la musica di Verdi era stata assimilata nella coscienza nazionale. Ma questo successe cento anni fa e, nonostante i contorni gentili di “Va, pensiero” incoraggeranno sempre un tale modo di pensare, il *Nabucco* non dovrebbe rimanere per sempre avvolto in un momento nostalgico. L’opera, in realtà, possiede moltissime altre qualità e annuncia in molti altri modi l’emergere di una nuova, vitale presenza nella scena operistica italiana: una voce che si sarebbe sviluppata ulteriormente nei quarant’anni seguenti, ma che avrebbe sempre mantenuto parte di quell’energia e di quella potenza che *Nabucco* manifesta con così grande risoluzione.

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Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Sinossi

COMPACT DISC ONE

[1] Sinfonia

Parte I: Gerusalemme

All'interno del Tempio di Salomone a Gerusalemme

[2] – [6] I sacerdoti e il popolo di Gerusalemme lamentano la conquista della loro patria da parte dell’esercito babilonese guidato da Nabucco e da Abigaille, supposta figlia maggiore di quest’ultimo. Gli Ebrei hanno catturato un’altra figlia di Nabucco, Fenena, e la tengono come ostaggio.

[7] Quando Ismaele e Fenena vengono lasciati soli nel tempio, veniamo a sapere che i due sono innamorati. [8] Giunge Abigaille, al comando di soldati babilonesi travestiti da Ebrei. [9] – [11] Anch’essa si è innamorata di Ismaele durante la prigionia di questi a Babilonia, e ora lo schernisce con la sua vittoria. Arriva Zaccaria [12] – [13] e Nabucco irrompe alle porte del tempio. [14] Zaccaria minaccia di uccidere Fenena, ma la giovane viene salvata da Ismaele. [15] Nabucco ordina immediatamente la distruzione del tempio.

Parte II: L’empio

La reggia di Babilonia

[16] – [17] Abigaille, tormentata dal suo amore non corrisposto per Ismaele, scopre di essere figlia di schiavi. [18] Il gran sacerdote di Belo arriva con la notizia che Fenena sta liberando tutti gli schiavi Ebrei. Dice di aver già iniziato a spargere la voce che Nabucco è stato ucciso in battaglia e [19] Abigaille decide di salire lei stessa sul trono.

Una stanza nel palazzo

[20] – [23] Ismaele viene maledetto dagli Ebrei per aver tradito la loro causa.

[24] – [26] Abigaille viene dichiarata regina e sta per porsi sul capo la corona, quando giunge Nabucco e gliela toglie dalle mani. [27] Nabucco si gira verso la folla e si dichiara non solo re, ma anche dio. Un fulmine improvviso lo colpisce e una forza soprannaturale gli fa cadere la corona dal capo. [28] Nabucco sembra come impazzito. Abigaille si pone sul capo la corona.

COMPACT DISC TWO

Parte III: La profezia

Orti pensili nella reggia di Babilonia

[1] Abigaille, vittoriosa, è stata incoronata



Regina di Assiria. ^[2] Nabucco viene portato al suo cospetto ^[3] e Abigaille lo convince con l'inganno a firmare un decreto che condanna a morte tutti gli Ebrei. ^[4] – ^[5] Nabucco si rende conto troppo tardi di essere stato ingannato e di aver condannato a morte anche sua figlia. ^[6] Invano implora la salvezza di Fenena.

Le sponde dell'Eufrate

^[7] Gli schiavi Ebrei lamentano la loro prigionia in un coro in cui invocano la loro patria lontana. ^[8] – ^[9] Zaccaria, il gran sacerdote, profetizza la caduta di Babilonia.

Parte IV: L'idolo infranto

La reggia

^[10] Nabucco, prigioniero nel proprio palazzo reale, ode una marcia funebre e vede la figlia Fenena mentre viene condotta sul luogo dell'esecuzione. ^[11] Prega Geova, Dio di Israele, ^[12] e risavisce. Abdallo arriva con un gruppo di soldati per liberare il suo re. ^[13] Si precipitano tutti a salvare Fenena.

Orti pensili

^[14] – ^[16] Fenena e gli Ebrei stanno per essere condotti a morte quando arriva Nabucco e la statua del dio cade rompendosi. ^[17] Nabucco li invita a lodare un solo Dio, Geova. ^[18] Abigaille

(veniamo a sapere) si è avvelenata e, morente, chiede perdono a Dio.

Traduzione: Emanuela Guastella

Alan Opie (Nabucco) si esibisce con frequenza in teatri come Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, English National Opera, Metropolitan, Teatro alla Scala, Bayerische Staatsoper di Monaco, Vienna State Opera e il Glyndebourne Festival. Tra i ruoli interpretati figurano Beckmesser in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, che ha cantato ad Amsterdam, Bayreuth, Monaco, Torino, Vienna, Berlino (State Opera) e con la Chicago Symphony Orchestra, sotto la direzione di Solti; Balstrode in *Peter Grimes* (Saito Kinen Festival, Giappone, Opéra Bastille di Parigi, Vienna, Metropolitan, English National Opera, Teatro Comunale di Firenze e Covent Garden); Sharpless (*Madama Butterfly*) al Metropolitan e a Monaco, Covent Garden, Cagliari, Tokyo, Sumida e Beijing; Germont père in *La traviata* (Covent Garden, English National Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin); Falstaff (English National Opera e Norwegian Opera); Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen* (English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Festival di Spoleto e Teatro alla Scala) e Rigoletto (English National e Canadian Opera, Toronto).

Si è esibito anche in occasione delle prime mondiali di *Outis* di Berio, in cui ha interpretato il ruolo di protagonista sia al Teatro alla Scala di Milano che allo Châtelet di Parigi; *Sophie's Choice* di Maw a Covent Garden, sotto la direzione di Rattle; e *Madame Mao* di Sheng al Santa Fe Festival.

Ha contribuito a circa venti incisioni operistiche complete per Chandos, interpretando i ruoli di Luna (*Il trovatore*), Enrico (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Don Carlo (*Ernani*), Balstrode (*Peter Grimes*) e Figaro (*The Barber of Seville*). Ha vinto due premi Grammy e ha ricevuto una nomination all'Olivier Award nella categoria "Outstanding achievement in opera" per la sua performance in Falstaff con la English National Opera.

Nata a Birmingham, in Alabama, **Susan Patterson** (Abigaille) ha studiato pianoforte presso la Samford University, dove fu incoraggiata ad aggiungere anche studi vocali al suo programma. Conseguito un master alla Florida State University, ha studiato canto con Virginia Zeani all'Indiana University. La San Francisco Opera le ha assegnato il prestigioso titolo di Adler Fellow per la stagione 1986/87 e in seguito si è distinta nel mondo dell'opera

cantando *La traviata* sia per loro che per la Welsh National Opera. Da allora ha interpretato il ruolo più di 150 volte.

Susan Patterson è stata molto acclamata per la sua interpretazione dei ruoli di Margarita/Helena nel *Mefistofele* di Boito, *Rusalka* di Dvořák; una nuova produzione di *Ernani* con la Reisopera in Olanda; Chimène (*Le Cid*), Mme. de Tourvel (*Dangerous Liaisons*) e *Tosca* con la Washington Opera; Mimì (*La Bohème*) e *Aida* con la Baltimore Opera; e *Manon Lescaut* allo Spoleto Festival USA. Ha interpretato anche Donna Anna e le tre eroine in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, con la Opera Company of Philadelphia, e Magda (*La rondine*) con Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Si è esibita frequentemente con la San Francisco Opera in ruoli come Angelica (*Orlando furioso* di Vivaldi), Anne Trulove (*The Rake's Progress*), Constanze (*The Abduction from the Seraglio*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) e Helena (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*). In Europa, ha cantato al Teatro alla Scala di Milano in *Lodoïska* di Cherubini; con la Netherlands Opera in *Le Comte Ory* e *Mitridate*; in Aix-en-Provence nel ruolo di Constanze; e con la Cologne Opera e Paris Opéra-Comique in *L'occasione fa il ladro*.

Come parte della serie Opera in English di Chandos ha inciso i ruoli di Amelia (*A Masked*



Ball), Elvira (*Ernani*) ed Electra in *Idomeneo*. Altre incisioni includono *Le Comte Ory* e *Il matrimonio segreto*.

Alastair Miles (Zaccaria) è riconosciuto a livello internazionale come uno dei migliori bassi del mondo. Si è esibito alla Metropolitan Opera House (Giorgio in *I Puritani* e Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor*); all'Opéra National de Paris-Bastille (Raimondo); a Vienna (Philip II nel *Don Carlos*, Zaccaria nel *Nabucco*, Cardinal Brogni in *La Juive* di Halévy, de Silva in *Ernani*, e Giorgio); alla Bayerische Staatsoper, Monaco (nel ruolo di protagonista in *Saul*); a San Francisco (Giorgio, Raimondo e Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*); ad Amsterdam (Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro*); al Teatro Real di Madrid (Philip II e Raimondo); a Palermo (Walter in *Luisa Miller*); a Siviglia (Mephistopheles in *Faust*); con la English National Opera (nel ruolo di protagonista nel *Mephistopheles* di Boito, Zaccaria, de Silva e Ford in *Sir John in Love*); e presso la Royal Opera, Covent Garden (Rodolfo in *La Sonnambula*, Elmiro in *Otello*, Frère Laurent in *Roméo et Juliette*, Banquo in *Macbeth* e in performance concertistiche del *Dom Sebastien* di Donizetti, inciso anche per Opera Rara); e nel ruolo di Mephistopheles in *La Damnation de Faust*, in concerti tenuti a

Londra e New York con la London Symphony Orchestra e Sir Colin Davis.

Una carriera concertistica di grande successo gli ha permesso di esibirsi in tutto il mondo con direttori come Giulini, Mehta, Muti, Chung, Masur, Gergiev, Gardiner e Sir Colin Davis, oltre che con le orchestre più prestigiose. Attualmente la sua discografia vanta oltre cinquanta incisioni, tra cui *Elijah* di Mendelssohn, Requiem di Verdi, e *Saul e Agrippina* di Handel. Per la serie Opera in English di Chandos ha inciso Mephistopheles (*Faust*), Ramfis (*Aida*), Colline (*La Bohème*) e un disco di Grandi Arie Operistiche.

Jane Irwin (Fenena) ha studiato presso la Lancaster University e il Royal Northern College of Music, dove ha ricevuto una borsa di studio della Peter Moores Foundation. Tra i tanti premi che le sono stati assegnati figurano il Singers' Competition del 1993, al Concorso Internazionale di Ginevra, e il Premio Decca Kathleen Ferrier del 1991.

Ha debuttato alla Royal Opera House nel 1995, interpretandovi poi il ruolo di Suzuki (*Madama Butterfly*). Per la Scottish Opera ha interpretato Suzuki, Maddalena (*Rigoletto*), Waltraute (*Götterdämmerung*), Fatima (Weber's *Oberon*) e Thea (*The Knot Garden* di Tippett).

Per la English National Opera ha interpretato Brangäne (*Tristan und Isolde*).

Jane Irwin si è esibita frequentemente in Europa e in America come interprete concertistica e di recital, debuttando alla Carnegie Hall con la Pittsburgh Symphony diretta da Mariss Jansons. Ha interpretato *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* di Mahler ai BBC Proms e al Festival di Berlino, *Lucrezia* di Handel e La Messa dell'Incoronazione di Mozart con la San Francisco Symphony, *Missa Solemnis* di Beethoven con l'Orchestra Sinfonica di Berlino, *Das Lied von der Erde* di Mahler per la Deutsche Symphonie-Orchester Berlin e con la BBC Philharmonic.

Ha collaborato con Orchestre de Paris, Rotterdam Philharmonic, Seattle Symphony, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Orchestra Nazionale Spagnola, Finnish Radio Symphony, Accademia di Santa Cecilia di Roma. Si è inoltre esibita in recital allo Châtelet di Parigi, oltre che a Londra, Ginevra, Aix-en-Provence e Giappone.

Il giovane tenore italo – americano **Leonardo Capalbo** (Ismaele) si è già guadagnato le lodi della critica internazionale. Ha studiato presso la Juilliard School of Music, la Music Academy of the West a Santa Barbara, in California, e

L'Academie Musicale de Villecroze in Francia. Ruoli passati includono Dino Corelli (*A Wedding* di Bolcom), Fadinard (*Il cappello di paglia di Firenze* di Rota), Lenski (*Eugene Onegin*), Rodolfo (*La Bohème*) e Macduff (*Macbeth*) per Opera Holland Park.

Leonardo Capalbo ha fatto il suo debutto operistico in Europa nel 2004, interpretando Paco in *La vida breve* di De Falla, per Opera North, ritornandovi per esibirsi poi nei ruoli di Luigi (*Il tabarro*), Ismaele (*Nabucco*), Narraboth (*Salome*) e Juan (*Der Kuhhandel* di Weill). Si è esibito anche con la Israeli Opera (Alfredo in *La traviata*).

Camilla Roberts (Anna) è nata a Wrexham, nel Galles. Diplomatasi presso la Guildhall School of Music and Drama, ha poi frequentato il Guildhall Opera Course, studiando con Laura Sarti, grazie a una sponsorizzazione degli enti The Arts Council of Wales e Countess of Munster Trust. Ha poi compiuto studi ulteriori presso il National Opera Studio di Londra, con un finanziamento della Welsh National Opera. Nel giugno 2004 Camilla Roberts ha vinto il concorso "Welsh Singers".

Nel 2003 è entrata a far parte della Welsh National Opera in qualità di Artista Associato, interpretando ruoli come Micäela (*Carmen*),



Diane (*Iphigénie en Tauride*) e Laura (*Iolanta*). Altri impegni recenti includono Anna (*Nabucco*) per Opera North, Tatyana (*Eugene Onegin*) per Opera Holland Park, e Anna (*Le villi*) per Chelsea Opera.

Camilla Roberts si è esibita presso la Queen Elizabeth Hall e St John's Smith Square a Londra, e nella St David's Hall di Cardiff. Ha cantato in tournée in Australia e Nuova Zelanda e il suo repertorio concertistico include il Requiem di Verdi e *Sea Symphony* di Vaughan Williams. Tra le sue incisioni figura un CD di arie viennesi realizzato in collaborazione con la Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Dean Robinson (Gran Sacerdote) è nato e ha studiato in Australia. Si è trasferito in Gran Bretagna per continuare i suoi studi di canto presso il Royal Northern College of Music di Manchester, dove ha ricevuto numerosi premi e onorificenze, tra cui il Robin Kaye per Opera e numerosi premi dalla Peter Moores Foundation.

I suoi impegni operistici includono Pluto (*Orfeo*), Passauf nella prima mondiale di *Dr Ox's Experiment* e Colline (*La Bohème*) per English National Opera; Sparafucile (*Rigoletto*) e Sarastro (*Die Zauberflöte*) per Scottish Opera; Colline, Mr Ratcliffe (*Billy*

Budd) e Angelotti (*Tosca*) per Welsh National Opera. Per la Royal Opera ha interpretato numerosi ruoli secondari. Tra le sue incisioni, Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) per Chandos e Duca d'Argile (*Prigione d'Edimburgo*) per Opera Rara.

Paul Wade (Abdallo) è nato a Huddersfield, in Inghilterra, dove ha studiato prima di recarsi al Royal College of Music. È poi entrato a far parte dell'English Opera Group, con cui ha interpretato molte opere di Britten, e si è esibito in tournée in Australia con le *Church Parables*.

Ha preso parte ai principali festival europei, si è esibito con la San Francisco Opera, Covent Garden e Welsh National Opera, e ha debuttato all'English National Opera nel ruolo di Monostatos (*The Magic Flute*). È entrato a far parte di Opera North fin dai suoi inizi e vi ha interpretato oltre quaranta ruoli, tra cui il Narratore (*Threepenny Opera*), Dancaïro (*Carmen*), Mr Leonard (*Maskerade*), Father Paul (*The Duenna*, inciso anche per Chandos), Monostatos, Bardolph (*Falstaff*), Guillot de Morfontaine (*Manon*) e, più recentemente, Isacco (*The Thieving Magpie*), prima di lasciare la compagnia nel 2004. Attualmente si dedica all'insegnamento del canto con una carriera di grande prestigio.

Opera North è la compagnia lirica dell'Inghilterra del nord e una delle principali organizzazioni artistiche europee, impegnata al massimo nell'allestimento di opere di stimolare, interessare e intrattenere. Oltre a svolgere tournée nell'Inghilterra del nord e a Londra, compare nei teatri lirici europei in città quali Praga e Barcellona e si esibisce in importanti festival internazionali tra cui quelli di Edimburgo e di Ravenna. Il suo approccio innovativo nei confronti della programmazione e dello stile di esecuzione è stato apprezzato e ricompensato con alcuni prestigiosi riconoscimenti, tra cui quattro per la stagione Eight Little Greats del 2004 (Royal Philharmonic Society Opera and Music Theatre Award, The South Bank Show Opera Award, TMA Theatre Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera, Manchester Evening News Theatre Award for Opera).

Opera North è un'organizzazione vivace e dinamica, che ha il coraggio di mettere in discussione la percezione convenzionale dell'opera per dare nuova vita ai classici. La compagnia si è inoltre fatta paladina delle opere meno note e del teatro musicale. Opera North collabora con artisti e compagnie impegnati utilizzando mezzi

di comunicazione diversi, tra cui film e arte visiva. Il versatile Coro e l'Orchestra della compagnia si esibiscono in maniera indipendente e rinnovano costantemente il proprio approccio nei confronti del far musica. Opera North Education è uno dei dipartimenti di educazione artistica più rispettati a livello nazionale e utilizza l'opera come mezzo per ispirare e sviluppare la creatività artistica nell'intera comunità.

David Parry ha studiato con Sergiu Celibidache ed ha cominciato la sua carriera come assistente di Sir John Pritchard. Ha debuttato all'English Music Theatre, quindi è diventato direttore d'orchestra presso la Städtische Bühnen di Dortmund e la Opera North. È stato Direttore Musicale di Opera 80 dal 1983 al 1987 e dal 1992 è stato Direttore Musicale fondatore dell'Opera di Almeida.

Lavora copiosamente in opere e concerti, a livello nazionale ed internazionale. Ha diretto diverse produzioni presso la English National Opera e la Opera North e appare regolarmente con la Philharmonia Orchestra e la London Philharmonic Orchestra. Nel 1996 ha debuttato con *Così fan tutte* al Glyndebourne Festival, dove nel 1998 ha diretto la prima mondiale di *Flight* di Jonathan Dove.



È un frequente visitatore della Spagna dove si è esibito in concerto con la maggior parte delle maggiori orchestre spagnole. Ha diretto la prima spagnola di *Peter Grimes* a Madrid e nel 1996 la prima produzione spagnola di *The Rake's Progress*. È apparso in Germania, Svizzera, Paesi Bassi, al Festival di Pesaro in Italia, al Festival Internazionale di Hong Kong, in Giappone con una tournée della *Carmen* e in Messico con la UNAM Symphony Orchestra. Recenti nuove produzioni da lui dirette comprendono il *Fidelio* al Festival della Nuova Zelanda, *Lucia di Lammermoor* alla New Israeli Opera e *Don Giovanni* alla Staatsoper di Hannover.

Il suo lavoro in studio di registrazione comprende la produzione della BBC di *Der Vampyr* di Marschner nonché ventotto registrazioni operistiche complete con il patrocinio della Peter Moores Foundation.

Tra questi vi sono numerosi dischi per l'etichetta Opera Rara che hanno vinti parecchi premi, tra cui il belga Prix Cecilia per la *Rosmonda d'Inghilterra* di Donizetti. Per Chandos ha diretto una serie di registrazioni di arie d'opera (con Sir Thomas Allen, Bruce Ford, Alan Opie, Diana Montague, Dennis O'Neill, Alastair Miles, Yvonne Kenny, John Tomlinson, Barry Banks, Della Jones e Andrew Shore), nonché *Fidelio*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *A Masked Ball*, *Idomeneo*, *Carmen*, *The Thieving Magpie*, *Don Giovanni*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Lucia of Lammermoor*, *Ernani*, *Il trovatore*, *Aida*, *Faust*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *La bohème*, *Turandot*, *Tosca* (vincitrice di un premio) e brani scelti da *Der Rosenkavalier*, tutte in collaborazione con la Peter Moores Foundation.



On Session: Leonardo Capalbo, Paul Wade, Jane Irwin





COMPACT DISC ONE

[1] Overture

Part I: In Jerusalem

In Jerusalem. Inside the Temple of Solomon

Opening Chorus

Hebrews, Levites and Hebrew Maidens

- [2]** The glory of Israel is shattered and broken,
the doom of the people of Judah is spoken.
Appointed by God to accomplish His vengeance,
the King of Assyria is come with the sword.
The fierce exulting clamour of savage battalions
resounds through the shrine of Jehovah the Lord.

Levites

O daughters of Israel, your garments now rend ye,
and lift up your voices in humble entreaty.
The pure supplication of lips that are blameless,
arises to heav'n and is pleasing to God.
So pray then ye maidens that God in his mercy,
may vanquish the foe man and keep you from harm.
(All kneel.)

Hebrew Maidens

Jehovah Who ridest the wind in its fury,
Who maketh the lightning to flash from the storm-cloud,
O vanquish and scatter the ranks of the heathen

and let all Thy children rejoice once again.
O hear us, we pray Thee, in humble entreaty,
forgive our transgressions and comfort our pain.
Rebuke Thou the heathen who cry out against Thee...
'Who is this God Who leaveth His people in danger?'

O let not Thy children be left to the mercy
of madmen defying the pow'r of their Lord.
Protect, in Thy wisdom, the Temple of David:
let all who defile it be slain by the sword!
O Lord we pray, O Lord we pray, O Lord we pray.
(All rise.)

Cavatina

Zachariah *(leads Fenena forward)*

- [3]** Take heart, oh my children!
The Lord, in token of His mercy has placed
within my keeping this most precious hostage;
the daughter of Nabucco *(pointing to Fenena)* will
bring us peace again.

Chorus

Oh, may this night of sorrow turn to a brighter day.

Zachariah

Banish your fear!
Banish your fear and trust ye the pow'r of the Almighty.

- [4]** When on the shores of Egypt, we called on Him
to save us;

out of the house of bondage He brought us back
home once again...
Who in affliction or sorrow has called on Him,
has called in vain?
Hope once again is dawning, hope of a bright tomorrow.

Chorus

Hope once again is dawning,
hope of a brighter tomorrow.
Hope once again is dawning,
hope of a brighter day.
A brighter day, has dawned!
[5] What a tumult!

Ismael

Fiercely raging, from Assyria, from Assyria the
King advances;
all the nations and the people bow their heads
and fly before him!

Chorus

We will die first!

Zachariah

May Jehovah be moved to punish the impious traitor:
on the holy land of Zion ne'er shall heathen foot
be set.
Take the daughter of Nabucco, safely guard her.
(gives Fenena into the care of Ismael)

Chorus

Have mercy, oh, God!

Zachariah

- [6]** As the shadows before the sunlight, as the storm-cloud
before the whirlwind,
so the heathen before Jehovah shall be scattered
and overthrown.
God of Abraham, protect us, stand and fight
with us against the tyrant,
send destruction upon the stranger, give us
courage to win the day,
give us courage in the battle.

Chorus

As the dark before the sunlight, as the cloud
before the whirlwind,
heathen gods before Jehovah will be shattered
and overthrown,
all the false gods of the heathen will be scattered
and o'erthrown.

Zachariah

As the shadows before the sunlight, as the storm-cloud
before the whirlwind,
so the heathen before Jehovah shall be scattered
and overthrown.
God of Abraham, protect us, stand and fight
with us against the tyrant.

Chorus and Zachariah

Send destruction upon the stranger, give us
courage to win the day.



Oh, give us courage, give us strength to vanquish the foe.

Recitative and Terzettino

Ismael

[7] Fenena! Oh, my beloved!

Fenena

Your country is in danger and you would speak of love!

Ismael

Cruel one! To me you are fairer than on the day when first I saw you, when in great Babylon I came to plead for Judah. There, in peril of your life, you rescued us from prison, heeding no danger, braving the jealousy and wrath of your sister who tried in vain to win me and gain my love.

Fenena

Can I forget it? I am now the captive!

Ismael

But I am here to save you and set you free again.

Fenena

Ismael! Would you then be false to your vow?

Ismael

Fear not! Remember that you dared all for me!
Come, then, with my life I will protect you, from a thousand dangers!

(Abigail enters, sword in hand, followed by Babylonian soldiers disguised as Hebrews. She stops with a mocking smile before the two lovers.)

Abigail

[8] Jehovah falls before us!

Fenena

Abigail!

Ismael (*confounded*)

Abigail!

Abigail

Bravest of the brave!
The warrior in love alone victorious!
(*to Fenena*)
A daughter of Assyria his victim!
O shameful conquest!
(*angrily*)
What God can save you?
Death and foul dishonour your sentence shall be!
My hour of triumph is come at last, on you my venegance shall fall!
(*She goes up to Ismael.*)
[9] Once I loved you, for your devotion, crown and heart would I have given!

Yet this love of mine drives me to madness, life or destruction, lie in my pow'r.
Ah, if you love me, I still may save your people from their fate.

Ismael

Ah, no! I yield to you my life, my honour, my devotion I cannot give you.
With my fortune I die contented, for myself I have no fear.

Abigail

Yes, I loved you!
Yet this longing drives me to madness.
Yes, I loved you!

Fenena

Ah! Hear my pleading, Oh, Jehovah, mighty Lord and God of Israel:
in this hour of peril, hear me, pity those I love so well.

Ismael

May my pray'r have pow'r to move you, pow'r to save my native land.

Abigail

Ah, if you love me I still may save, Ah! save your people from their fate.

Fenena

Oh, protect my brother and condemn me to weep alone!
Oh, protect him in this hour, hear I implore Thee.

Ismael

May my pray'r have pow'r to move you, pow'r to save my native land.

Chorus

Hebrew Women (*enter hurriedly*)

[10] Have you seen him? Fiercely riding, he advances upon the city.

Elders

Ever onward, his spear uplifted, red with blood of the men of Judah!

Levites

Naught availeth and none withstand him in defence of our holy temple.

Women

Our entreaties in vain we utter. God is deaf unto all our pleading!

All

Oh, how blessed they who died!
Oh, how blessed they who died ere they saw this fatal hour!



(enter Hebrew soldiers, disarmed)

Soldiers

See the tyrant in his chariot to the temple
proudly riding!
Rushing onward like a storm-cloud, spreading
ruin and destruction!

Zachariah *(enters quickly)*

Oh, what bold, presumptuous daring fills the
tyrant's cruel heart!

Zachariah and Chorus

All is over!
Who will save the holy temple of the Lord!
Day of terror!
All is over!
Who will save the holy temple of the Lord?

Part I Finale

Abigail comes forward with her soldiers.

Abigail

¹¹ Long live Nabucco!

Chorus *(off-stage)*
Nabucco!

Zachariah

Who let this woman enter?

Ismael *(pointing to the disguised Babylonians)*

These cursed traitors!

Abigail

Your anger is useless... the king approaches!

*(Babylonian soldiers pour into the temple. Nabucco
appears on horseback at the temple entrance.)*

Zachariah

¹² Profaner! You shall not enter!
(barring his way)
This is the house of God!

Nabucco

Who speaks of God?

*(Zachariah runs quickly and seizes Fenena, raising
his dagger.)*

Zachariah

E'er you desecrate our temple, first you shall see
this dagger plunged in your daughter's heart.

Nabucco *(dismounts) (aside)*

(I'll humour him... but I will show him that I am
master here.)

¹³ Tremble, you madmen, yes, tremble before my
anger!
You are my victims, my victims for evermore!
Your blood shall flow in torrents, your tears shall
fall unheeded,

rebellious Zion shall pay for her folly in blood
and tears!

Fenena

Father, have pity, Father have mercy! Death
hovers near me, save me, oh father, oh, father,
hear me, for you I die.

Anna, Ismael, Zachariah, Hebrews and Levites

Oh, Thou who knowest the hearts of princes,
mighty Jehovah,
protect us now, look down from heaven, from
heav'n above.

Abigail

With ev'ry moment my fury is rising!
hope of revenge again is dawning;
for he, the madman who dares to scorn me,
shall fall a victim unto my rage!
Victim to my vengeance shall fall!

Anna, Ismael, Zachariah, Hebrews and Levites

Make Lord Thy presence to shine upon us.
Comfort Thy children in exile and give them faith.

Fenena

Father, oh father, your daughter implores you,
death hovers near me, oh father, for you I die.

Nabucco

¹⁴ You slaves, bow down before me! In me behold
your master

Where is the God you worship?

To you He gives no answer!

He dare not come!

Against my pow'r no God or man can ever
prevail!

Zachariah

Blasphemer, silence!

(raising his dagger above Fenena)

You have called aloud for blood and vengeance,
look on your daughter!
She shall die by my own hand, before you!

Nabucco

Seize him!

Zachariah *(menacing Fenena)*

She dies!

*(Ismael suddenly intervenes and releases Fenena who
throws herself into her father's arms.)*

Ismael

Stay your hand! My love shall buy her life!

Nabucco *(ferociously)*

¹⁵ Now my wrath, restrained no longer, burns with
ever-growing fury;
sack and plunder *(to the Babylonians)* burn the
temple, show no pity or remorse.



Abigail

Race of heathens, be accursed, from this earth
you all shall perish!
Though the love that burns within me, ne'er
shall lose its bitter pain.
If that love still be denied me, then my hatred he
shall know.

Anna and Fenena

Ardent, unavailing passion, in his heart is fiercely
burning,
yet the love that guides his spirit on his name will
bring disgrace.
We beseech you do not curse him, but have pity
on his fate.

Ismael

Ardent, unavailing passion, in my heart is fiercely
burning,
yet the love that guides my spirit on his name
will bring disgrace.
We beseech you do not curse him, but have pity
on his fate.

Nabucco

Sack and plunder, burn the temple, show no pity
or remorse!
Tear the children from their mothers, all shall
perish by the sword!

Zachariah and Hebrews

Traitor vile, be thou rejected and dishonoured by
thy brothers!
For thy sin be thou accursed by thy people
evermore.
Cast away the wretch accursed, earth and heav'n
will cry aloud.

Anna, Fenena and Ismael

I beseech you, do not curse him, but have pity
on his fate.

Abigail

Though the love *etc.*

Nabucco

Sack and plunder *etc.*

Zachariah and Hebrews

Cast away *etc.*

Part II: The Blasphemy

In the royal apartments

Scene and Aria

*Abigail (enters quickly with a parchment in her
hand)*

- [16] You have betrayed me, O king accursed...
this writing, so long but vainly hidden, tells me
my birth was so shameful.
I am the child of slaves – a slave... so be it!

The daughter of Nabucco, the people believe me.
What then am I? Less than a slave-girl!
The king has left Fenena on the throne as his regent.
He goes to battle vowing to spread destruction
among the land of Judah!
That I should live to see another usurping my
rightful place!
They have all betrayed me, yet what folly is theirs...
the pow'r within me, how little do they know it!
My vengeance, my wrath and vengeance shall fall
upon them!
Yes! Fall on Fenena, on him I thought my
father...
this empire... on myself, too... destruction!
Yes, here I swear it!

- [17] The sweet fire of love's enchantment
once in my heart was glowing;
then all on earth around me
repeated the tale of love o'er-flowing;
I wept another's grief to know,
I suffered with others in their woe;
ah, who can restore me the joy of love forever lost?
Another's grief could move me
to weep for all their sorrow,
who can restore me the joy of love forever lost?
[18] Who approaches?

High Priest

I bring you tidings of a deed that will appal you!

Abigail

Ah! What mean you?

High Priest

The Hebrew slaves are freed by order of Fenena!

Abigail

Ah!

High Priest

This accursed race of heathens, will they never
be subdued?
Crown and sceptre both await you...

Abigail (*eagerly*)

How so?

High Priest

The way is all prepared.

Followers

We have spread abroad the rumour that the king
has fallen in battle.
As their ruler all salute you. As their ruler the
people salute you,
and they call on you to save them.
Take the step and the deed is accomplished!
Have no fear.

Abigail (*to the High Priest*)

With you, I stand
Oh, my friends, you'll find my courage will not
fail you in this hour!

- [19] On the golden throne of Assyria,
red with blood of conquered heathen,



there shall burn the fires of vengeance
with a fierce undying flame.
Crown and sceptre shall be mine alone,
all shall know their rightful ruler, ah!...
Mighty kings shall bow before me,
all shall tremble before my pow'r.

Followers

Now the wrath of Baal the mighty on the
heathen slave shall fall,
yes, the wrath of our god on the slave shall fall.

Abigail

On the golden throne of Assyria, *etc.*

High Priest

Now the vengeance of our god, the mighty Baal,
thro' thee, on heathen slave shall fall.

Prayer

A room in the palace

*At the back a communicating door giving access to
other apartments. Right, a door leading to a gallery.
Left, another door leading to the Royal Apartments.
It is evening. A lamp is burning.*

Zachariah (*enters, followed by a Levite carrying the
Tables of the Law*)

- [20] Come, stand beside me, the word of God set
before me.

God, this day commands me, in wond'rous
revelation;
he bids His servant to show an unbeliever the
holy light of truth, for Israel's glory.

- [21] Through Thy servant Thou proclaimest Thy
commandments, oh, Lord God almighty!
On this day, with voice of thunder, to Assyria
Thou hast spoken!
And with hymns of praise to Thee, Jehovah, ev'ry
temple shall resound;
o'er the shattered gods of the heathen, Thou,
Jehovah, shalt arise again.

*(He goes into Fenena's apartment followed by the
Levite.)*

Chorus of Levites

Ismael enters.

Levites

- [22] Who is there? Who comes to call us in this place
of gloomy shadows?

Ismael

Zachariah bids me call you!

Levites

Ismael!

Ismael

My brothers!

Levites

Begone! Traitor! Fly!

Ismael

Some pity show me!

Levites

Thou by heaven art accursed.

- [23] Woe to the traitor, he is accursed,
friendless he wanders and shunned by his people!
Tho' he may utter pray'rs and entreaties,
none will console him and none show him pity.
See on his forehead, burning and livid,
blazes the shameful mark of the damned.
Vainly he seeks by poison to perish
and all in vain begs for death by the sword.
Thou forever art accursed by the living God in
heav'n.

Ismael (*despairingly*)

For the love of God above us, do not curse me,
I implore you,
terror fills my soul with madness, oh, in mercy
let me die!
Have pity!

Part II Finale

*Anna (entering from Fenena's apartments followed
by Zachariah and Fenena)*

- [24] Stay your anger, oh, my brothers! He has brought
a soul to God!

Chorus of Levites

Speak, what mean you?

Zachariah

Praise ye the Lord God Almighty!
her words are true.

Fenena

- [25] But what means this disturbance?

Ismael, Zachariah and Levites

Oh, Heav'n, protect us!

(The aged Abdullah enters, much distressed.)

Abdullah (*to Fenena*)

My noble lady... you must fly now!
out there, the men are shouting:
'Nabucco is killed in battle!'

Fenena

My father!

Abdullah

Hasten! The populace acclaims your rival,
Abigail, and denounces Fenena!

Fenena

I cannot stay here, out there lies my duty!
At once to that mad crowd of rebels will I go.



Ismael, Abdullah, Zachariah and Levites
Stay here! They will kill you!

High Priest
Glory to Abigail!
Death to the Hebrews!

Abigail (*to Fenena*)
Give me the crown of empire!

Fenena
No! First I die!

(Nabucco and his attendants force their way through the crowd. He stands between Abigail and Fenena, seizes the crown and puts it on his own head.)

Nabucco
From my own head, then take it.
(*general consternation*)

[26] The moment approaches of man's retribution,
in silence and terror all tremble in fear
with fury increasing, the tempest is rising,
the day of destruction and sorrow is near.

Abigail
The moment approaches of man's retribution,
in silence and terror all tremble in fear
with fury increasing, the tempest is rising,
the day of destruction and sorrow is near.

All
The moment approaches *etc.*

Nabucco
[27] Hear your king!
You men of Babylon, I reject your god for ever;
Baal has made your hearts rebellious and disloyal
to my kingdom!
Race of slaves, your God, Jehovah, I have
trodden under foot!
Hearken all to my decree! There is but one god,
he is your King.

Fenena (*overcome*)
Father!

High Priest
He's raving!

Zachariah
The madman!

Chorus of Soldiers
Long live Nabucco!

Nabucco
Upon your knees bow down before me!
as god, you all shall adore me!

Zachariah
Blasphemer! In fear and terror you shall repent
this madness...

Our God is quick to anger, He will destroy your
kingdom...

Nabucco
You would defy me?
(*to the soldiers*)
Then seize him!
Come drag him to the temple and slay him on
the altar!
Yes, all the Jews shall die with him!

Fenena
With them, I too will die!

Nabucco (*with fury*)
Oh, traitress, bow down before me, adore your
god, Nabucco!

Fenena
My God is Jehovah!

Nabucco (*taking hold of her arm*)
Bow down to me! Your king no more... but God!

(A flash of lightning and a thunderbolt. The crown is torn from Nabucco's head by supernatural force. His features are distorted by madness. The commotion is followed by a profound silence.)

All
The vengeance of our mighty God has fallen on
his head!

Nabucco
[28] Who has stolen my crown and sceptre?
What accursed phantom haunts me?
See, he holds me, alas and drags me...
He will choke me... He will kill me!
Why? Oh! my daughter, do you too reject me...
for your father have you no pity?
Fiends of hell are all around me,
tongues of flame torment and burn me,
and above me, the sky is livid...
raining blood upon my head! Ah!
Ah! But why... but why this weeping...
Why these tears that fall upon my burning
cheek?
Why, of, why these tears that fall, these burning
tears upon my cheek?
I am fainting... oh, help me...

Zachariah
The wrath of the Lord has fall'n upon him!

Abigail (*picking up the crown which has fallen from Nabucco's head*)
Yet our god, the mighty Baal, reigns triumphant
in his might...

COMPACT DISC TWO

Part III: The Prophecy
The Hanging Gardens of Babylon
Abigail enthroned, surrounded by her court.

The High Priest and his retinue assembled near the altar on which stands the golden statue of Baal. Babylonian women, populace and soldiers.

Opening Chorus
Chorus

- [1] Great and mighty Queen of all Assyria,
Baal, our god has sent thee to guide us;
no invader dare defy thee,
mighty empires fall before thee.
Fair and glorious be thy future,
just reward to thee from the god.
May thy days with love and peace be crowned,
ev'ry pleasure, ev'ry joy be ever thine.

Recitative
High Priest

- [2] Most noble lady, mighty ruler of Assyria, oh, hear
thy people who call upon thee!
Let all the tribes of Israel perish by the sword,
and first among them, that evil woman I dare not
call your sister!
She has betrayed our god.

(gives the edict to Abigail)

Abigail *(feigning surprise)*
What are you asking? But, who approaches?
(Nabucco appears. He is unkempt and dishevelled.
The guards, with Abdullah at their head,
respectfully let him pass.)

Who has dared to free him and disobey my orders!
Guards, take this old man back to his prison.

Nabucco *(still demented)*
Who dares to speak before Nabucco?

Abdullah *(with devotion)*
Come with me, sire, I beg you...

Nabucco
Where would you take me? Stand aside!
Here is the council chamber, here, before me,
I see my people.
Release me... I need no hand to guide me,
(I know that I am failing, but they must never
know.
I would have my people think me strong as of
old.)

Leave me! I can find my throne without your
guidance.
(goes towards the throne)
Who is this woman?
Impious presumption!

Abigail *(She descends from the throne.)*
My people, I pray you leave us.

(general exit)

Duet
Nabucco
[3] Woman... who are you?

Abigail
I stand here as guardian of your kingdom.

Nabucco
You... its guardian? Impostor!
Have I renounced my sceptre?
Oh, traitress!

Abigail
While you lay helpless, the multitude cried out
against the Hebrews.
You must obey their wishes and sign this
decree...
(showing him the edict)
Obey your people, ah!
Obey them and sign it now.
Death to the tribes of Israel...

Nabucco
What do you mean?

Abigail
Sign it!

Nabucco
(An evil thought.)

Abigail
You will not?
Ye Jews, arise in triumph and glorify your
Jehovah!
Your mighty Jehovah!

Nabucco
Be silent!

Abigail
Trembling in craven terror, Nabucco hides his head!

Nabucco
'Tis false!
So be it, so be it; death to the tribes of Israel!
Give it me!
(seals the document and gives it to Abigail)

Abigail *(joyfully)*
Blessed hour of triumph!
(Two guards enter at a sign from Abigail.)
Blessed hour of triumph!
I fear her pow'r no longer!

Nabucco
Ah! But Fenena?

Abigail
Traitor! She serves the God of Israel!
(as if going)
She dies now!

Nabucco
She is my daughter!

Abigail
*(She gives the edict to the guards, who exit
immediately.)*
No one can save her!



Nabucco (*covering his face*)

Ah, no!

Abigail

Your other daughter...

Nabucco

Kneel to me, you slave before your king!

Abigail

Madman! You bid me to kneel to you! A slave am I?

(*Nabucco searches for the proof of Abigail's lowly birth.*)

A slave am I?

Nabucco

I have the proof!

Abigail

I give you back, ah,

(*produces the parchment and tears it to pieces*)

yes, I give you the false proof of my birth!

Nabucco

[4] Grey-haired and feeble, behold me, brought to disgrace and ruin.

In vain this cold and trembling hand feels for the sword once feared by all!

Gone is my ancient glory, no more am I a king, naught but a shadow of him who once was king!

Abigail

Day of revenge and triumph, moment so long awaited!

Nabucco

Ah! woe is me!

Abigail

Although I lose a father, I win a crown, and gain an empire!

The people shall bow before me, before the slave all men shall fall!

Nabucco

Gone is my ancient glory, naught but a shadow remains, of him who was once king!

Abigail

All men shall fall at my feet, the people in homage before the slave shall fall!

Nabucco

No more am I a king, ah, misery! I am no more a king!

(*trumpets in the distance*)

[5] Ah, that sound!

Abigail

It sends to death the Hebrew slaves that you have sentenced.

Nabucco

Ho! You guards! This slave betrays me! Ho! There!

Abigail (*a number of guards enter*)

You madman!

You still defy me?

King no longer, you are my pris'ner, you shall stay here under guard!

Nabucco

Under guard?

Abigail

Yes! Of that slave-girl who despises your commands!

Nabucco

Under guard?

Abigail

Yes! Yes!

Nabucco

[6] Oh, have pity on a father in his madness!

Oh, restore to me my daughter, do not leave me all alone.

As the ruler of Assyria, let them all acclaim you; I am old and all I ask you is the life of my child.

Abigail

Leave me! In vain you ask for mercy,

I care naught for your entreaties; all my shame and my dishonour by your torment are avenged.

Nabucco

Oh, have pity on a father in his madness!

Oh, restore my only daughter, do not leave me all alone.

As the ruler of Assyria, let the people acclaim you;

I am old and all I ask you is the life of my child.

Abigail

No, never! I care naught for your entreaties...

Leave me! Madman!

All shall see if I, the slave cannot wear the royal mantle!

all shall see that I am worthy to uphold the royal power.

All shall see, then, that I am worthy to uphold the splendour

of Assyria's royal power.

Your prayers are useless!

you ask in vain, your pleading is all in vain! No!

You ask in vain. No!

Chorus of Hebrew Slaves

On the banks of the Euphrates

Hebrews

[7] Speed your journey, my thoughts and my longings,



speed your journey to mountain and valley,
where the sweet-scented air breathes a fragrance
o'er the homes that we knew long ago!
To the waters of Jordan bear greeting,
to the downfallen temples of Sion.
On, my country so fair and so wretched,
oh, remembrance of joy and of woe!
Golden harps of the Prophets, oh tell me,
why so silent ye hang from the willow?
Once again sing the songs of our homeland
sing again of the days that are past.
We have drunk from the cup of affliction
and have shed bitter tears of repentance,
oh, inspire us, Jehovah, with courage
so that we may endure to the last.

Part III Finale

Zachariah

- [8] Why lament ye? The wailing of women rises up to
the throne of th' Almighty.
Oh, take courage, my brothers in affliction, 'tis
Jehovah who speaks through my words.
- [9] In the darkness I see all the future,
when the fetters that bind us are broken,
and the wrath of the Lion of Judah,
on the land of the heathen will fall.

Chorus

Mighty vision!

Zachariah

O'er the ruins of temple and palace,
there will wander hyenas and serpents,
o'er the dust lightly stirred by the breezes,
desolation will reign evermore.
Not a sound but the cry of the screech owl
will be heard thro' the shadows and silence,
not a stone will declare to the stranger
where the altars of the heathen were set.

Chorus

Oh, what courage within him is burning,
on his lips, the word of the Lord is revealed.
Through his servant, Jehovah the mighty speaks
to us, oh, hearken!
For the fetters that bind us shall be broken,
the Lion of Judah will rise,
once again the Lion of Judah will rise.

Part IV: The Broken Idol

A room in the palace, as in Part II

Prelude, Scene and Aria

Nabucco on a couch in deep sleep

Nabucco (awakes, panting for breath)

- [10] Am I awake or dreaming?
I thought that in the forest I ran before the
hunters like a wild beast at bay.
No, it was a dream, a dream full of terror.
(distant trumpets)

Out there, the soldiers are gathering!
Where is my sword?
My trusty steed that longs for the battle as
maidens long for dancing.
Come, my brave warriors! Behold the lofty
citadel of Zion tow'ring above us!
Destroy it! burn it to ashes!

Chorus (off-stage)

Fenena!

Nabucco

Ah, now my people, faithful to their sovereign,
call the name of my daughter!
(He goes to balcony.)
Look there. I can see her escorted by soldiers!
Ah, no! it cannot be... why are her hands so
closely bound and fettered?
She's weeping...

Chorus (off-stage)

Fenena must perish!

*(Nabucco's features take on a new expression;
he rushes to the door but finds that it is barred.)*

Nabucco

Ah! they have made me a prisoner!
*(He goes back to the balcony, stares at the street and
then puts his hand to his head.)*
God of Israel, have pity!
(He kneels.)

- [11] Lord God of Judah! Hear the vow I make to Thee.
Altars and temples once again shall rise to
honour Thee...
only release me from my torment...
oh, release me from my torment and Thee I'll
worship according to Thy law.
Thou dost hear me,... clouds are lifting
from the mind so sick and ailing, ah!...
Mighty Lord and God Jehovah, I will worship
Thee evermore.
(He rises and tries to force the door open.)
- [12] Open to me, you shall not stay me!

(Enter Abdullah and soldiers.)

Abdullah

My lord, whither go you?

Nabucco

Let me pass!

Abdullah

If they should see you, the people would mock
you in your madness.

Soldiers

We are here to defend you and protect you.

Nabucco (to Abdullah)

Nay, hear your king! My mind is sick and ill no
longer.
Abdullah, my sword... give me my sword.



Abdullah (*with surprise and joy*)

If you would save your empire, then take your sword.

Nabucco

I go to save Fenena!

Abdullah and Chorus

- [13] The false, perfidious enemy shall fall before us and cry for mercy! The glory of Assyria, with you to lead us, will rise again.

Nabucco

My valiant hearts, come follow me strength is reviving within me. See me, with ardour new inspired, king once again of Assyria. The false, perfidious enemy shall fall before us and cry for mercy! Once more my royal diadem will shine resplendent upon this land.

Abdullah and Chorus

With you to lead, Assyria shall rise again. We go with you to lead, we'll rise again. Lead on, with you we rise again triumphant our might.

Funeral March and Prayer

The Hanging Gardens, as in Part II
The High Priest of Baal stands under the peristyle

of the temple, near a sacrificial altar, beside which are two priests armed with halberds. Funereal music announces the arrival of Fenena, together with the Hebrews who have been condemned to death; Fenena kneels before Zachariah in the centre of the stage.

Zachariah

- [14] Go! The martyr's crown of honour will be yours, oh, gentle maiden; hard and long has been your exile, heav'n will give you your reward! Have courage!

Fenena

- [15] Lo! The sky has opened above me! For the Lord my spirit is yearning. He is calling me to heaven, to His joy and bliss eternal. Oh, ye stars farewell for ever! By the light of God my steps are guided, I am free from earthly torment. Soon my spirit shall find rest with God on high.

Part IV Finale

Anna, Fenena, Ismael, Zachariah and Chorus
Who dares to intrude here?

Chorus (*off-stage*)

- [16] Long live Nabucco!

High Priest

The victim awaits you!

(Nabucco runs on with drawn sword, followed by soldiers and Abdullah.)

Nabucco

Stay, I command you!
The false god you worship, the heathen idol, shall be destroyed!

(The idol falls suddenly in ruins.)

Anna, Fenena, Ismael, Zachariah and Chorus of Hebrews

The Lord has spoken!

Nabucco

Return home, Israel, home to your country and the joys of your own native land. There to Jehovah, rebuild your temple, for He alone is mighty, the Righteous, the Living God. He made me mad when I defied him, when I repented, he gave me peace. The cruel Abigail He drives to madness and in her terror she's taken poison! He alone is mighty, He alone is God, let us adore Him on bended knee.

(All kneel.)

All

- [17] Lord God of Israel...

Fenena, Ismael, Nabucco and Zachariah
All bow before Thee...

All

Vain is the pow'r of man...

Fenena, Ismael, Nabucco and Zachariah
In Thy dread sight.

Zachariah

Oh God of Israel, we bow before Thee!

All

Praise to Thee! Ah!
Jehovah, praise to Thee!

Fenena, Ismael, Nabucco and Zachariah
If Thou but smile on us, sorrow is banished,...

All

But when Thy thunder rolls, vain is earthly might.
Praise to Thee! Praise to Thee!

Nabucco

Oh, what do I see?

(Abigail enters, supported by two soldiers.)



Chorus

What brings the wretched woman to this place?

Abigail (*to Fenena*)

¹⁸ My strength... is failing... my death is near...
oh, tell me... that you forgive me!
Fenena! the crime was mine alone...
in anguish I make atonement.
(*to Ismael*)
Guard her!
(*to Nabucco*)
Their love is pure and faithful,
bless them, they trust in you!
But who can save me in this dread hour,
save me from my damnation?
Yet... you have told us, oh, Israel;
'Jehovah is merciful,...

Abigail and Hebrews

He pardons our transgressions.'

Abigail

I call Thee, Lord, do not reject me...
do not reject me now, ah!...

Hebrews

Oh, Lord have mercy.

Abigail

Do not reject me in this my hour of death!

(*She falls dead.*)

Hebrews

'Tis over!

Zachariah

Jehovah's servant now art thou, Oh, King of
Kings!

English translation by Norman Tucker
and Tom Hammond

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On session



Clockwise from top left: Susan Patterson, Alan Opie, Camilla Roberts and David Parry
with Leonardo Capalbo



The Opera In English Series

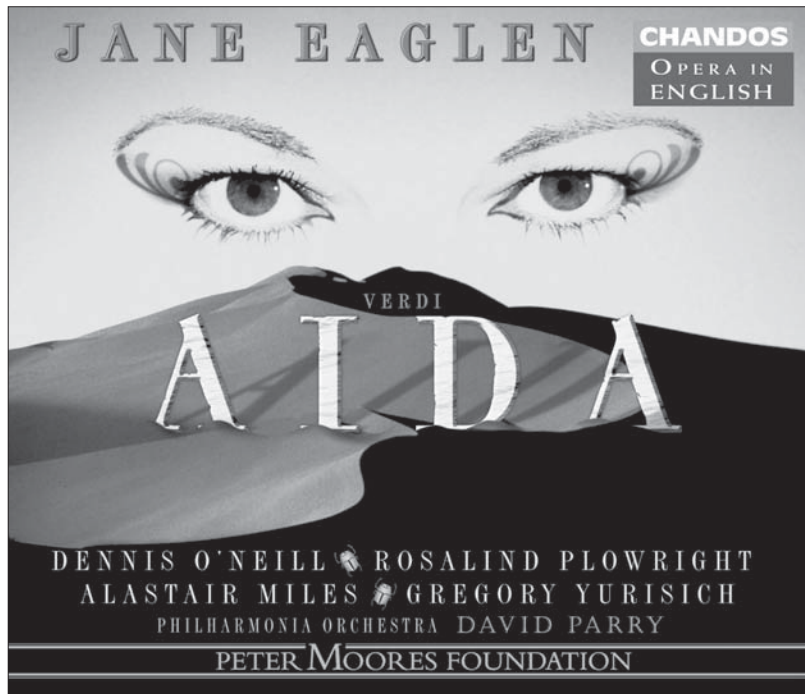
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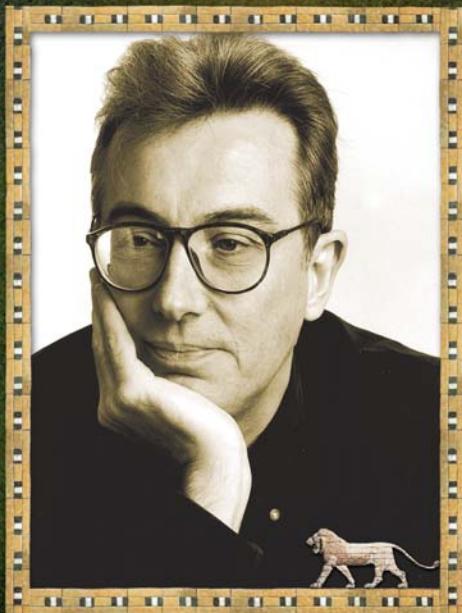
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CHANDOS DIGITAL

CHAN 3136(2)

Giuseppe Verdi (1813–1901)

Nabucco

Dramma lirico in four parts

Libretto by Temistocle Solera after Cortesi's ballet *Nabuccodonosor* andAnicet-Bourgeois' and Cornu's play *Nabuchodonosor*

English translation by Norman Tucker and Tom Hammond

Printed in the EU

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Nabucodonosor (Nabucco), King of Babylon.....Alan Opie *baritone*
 Ismael, nephew of Sedecia, King of Jerusalem.....Leonardo Capalbo *tenor*
 Zachariah, High Priest of the Hebrews.....Alastair Miles *bass*
 Abigail, slave, presumed to be Nabucodonosor's eldest daughterSusan Patterson *soprano*
 Fenena, daughter of Nabucodonosor.....Jane Irwin *mezzo-soprano*
 High Priest of Baal.....Dean Robinson *bass*
 Abdullah, elderly officer of the King of BabylonPaul Wade *tenor*
 Anna, Zachariah's sisterCamilla Roberts *soprano*

Opera North Orchestra and Chorus
 David Parry

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