



Great Opera Recordings

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Aida

Tebaldi • Del Monaco • Stignani • Protti • Corena
Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome
Alberto Erede
(Recorded in 1952)



Great Opera Recordings

Giuseppe

VERDI

(1813-1901)

Aida

Aida Renata Tebaldi (soprano)
Radamès Mario del Monaco (tenor)
Amneris Ebe Stignani (mezzo-soprano)
Amonasro Aldo Protti (baritone)
Il Re Fernando Corena (bass)
Ramfis Dario Caselli (bass)
Un messaggero Piero de Palma (tenor)

Chorus and Orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome
Alberto Erede

Recorded August, 1952 in Rome
First issued as Decca LXT 2735 through 2737

CD 1**67:52**

1 *Preludio* 4:13
(Orchestra)

Act I**34:56****Scene 1****24:26**

2 *Si: corre voce che l'Etiope* 1:28
(Ramfis, Radamès)

3 *Se quel guerrier io fossi! . . . Celeste Aida* 4:23
(Radamès)

4 *Quale insolita gioia nel tuo sguardo!* 5:53
(Amneris, Radamès, Aida)

5 *Alta cagion v'aduna, o fidi egizii* 3:15

6 *Su! del Nilo al sacro lido* 3:00
(King, Messenger, Radamès, Ramfis, Priests,
Ministers, Captains, Aida, Amneris)

7 *Ritorna vincitor!* 6:27
(Aida)

Scene 2**10:30**

8 *Possente, possente Fthà* 5:12
(High Priestess, Priestesses, Ramfis, Priests)

9 *Mortal, diletto ai numi* 5:18
(Ramfis, Priests, Radamès, Priestesses)

Act II**28:43****Scene 1****16:01**

10 *Chi mai fra gl'inni e i plausi* 6:04
(Slaves, Amneris)

11 *Fu la sorte dell'armi* 7:26
(Amneris, Aida)

12 *Su! del Nilo al sacro lido* 2:31
(Soldiers, People, Amneris, Aida)

Scene 2 (part 1)**12:42**

13 *Gloria all'Egitto, ad Iside* 3:47
(People, Women, Priests, Men)

14 *Marcia (Triumphal March)* 6:28
(Orchestra)

15 *Vieni, o guerriero, vindice* 2:28
(People, Priests)

Act II

Scene 2 (concluded)

13:09

1 *Salvator della patria, io ti saluto* 3:04
(King, Radamès, Ramfis, Priests, Aida, Amonasro)

2 *Quest'assisa ch'io vesto vi dica* 4:41
(Amonasro, Aida, Slaves, Prisoners, Ramfis, Priests, King, People)

3 *O re, pei sacri numi* 2:25
(Radamès, King, Amneris, Priests, People, Ramfis)

4 *Gloria all'Egitto, ad Iside* 3:00
(King, People, Slaves, Prisoners, Ramfis, Priests, Aida, Radamès, Amneris, Amonasro)

Act III

31:23

5 *O tu che sei d'Osiride* 4:41
(Priests, Priestesses, Ramfis, Amneris)

6 *Qui Radamès verrà! . . . O patria mia* 6:56
(Aida)

7 *Ciel! Mio padre!* 7:51
(Aida, Amonasro)

8 *Pur ti riveggo, mia dolce Aida* 2:49

9 *Fuggiam gli ardori inospiti* 4:00
(Radamès, Aida)

10 *Aida! . . . Tu non m'ami. Va!* 2:33
(Radamès, Aida, Amonasro)

11 *Tu! Amonasro!* 2:33
(Radamès, Aida, Amonasro, Amneris, Ramfis)

Act IV

32:09

Scene 1

20:55

12 *L'abborrita rivale a me sfuggia* 3:05
(Amneris)

13 *Già i sacerdoti adunansi* 6:40
(Amneris, Radamès)

14 *Ohimè! Morir mi sento* 4:11

15 *Radamès! Radamès! Radamès!* 7:00
(Amneris, Ramfis, Priests)

Scene 2

11:14

16 *La fatal pietra sovra me si chiuse* 2:17
(Radamès, Aida)

17 *Presago il core della tua condanna* 4:06
(Aida, Radamès, Priests, Priestesses)

18 *O terra, addio; addio, valle di pianti* 4:51
(Aida, Radamès, Priests, Priestesses, Amneris)

Giuseppe Verdi (1813-190)

Aida

The British company Decca began recording complete operas in Italy in 1951 when they made *La Bohème* (Naxos 8.110252-3). As a venue they chose the Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, situated off the Via del Corso in Via Condotta, near the Spanish Steps. The hall in which the recording was made is long and narrow, with a very high ceiling and a fine balcony, which also contained seats. The venue proved ideal for mono recording with the control room in an adjoining room on the same ground floor level. This recording of *Aida* was made in July 1952 and was a much larger undertaking than the previous year's efforts. The Triumphal Scene remains a challenge to any recording engineer, even today, but the difficulties would have been far greater fifty years ago with far fewer microphones and equipment that was much prone to break down at crucial moments. Rome in July is also invariably very hot.

The soprano **Renata Tebaldi** (b. 1922) studied at the Boito Conservatorio in Parma, before making her début as Elena in *Mefistofele* at Rovigo in 1944. She sang for Toscanini at the opening concert at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan, in 1946. Later that season she was engaged as Eva in *Meistersinger* and Mimi in *La Bohème*. Her first appearance outside Italy was in Lisbon in 1949 and the following year Tebaldi made her London début as Desdemona in *Otello* when the La Scala Company appeared at Covent Garden. Her international introduction came through her first American engagement as Aida in San Francisco in 1950, soon followed by three seasons in Rio de Janeiro. The Italian soprano first sang at the Metropolitan in New York in 1955, a house she would grace for seventeen further seasons before retiring from the stage in 1973 and the concert hall three years later. Tebaldi appeared regularly at the Vienna State Opera and also sang in Chicago and Japan. As the most significant Italian *lirico spinto* soprano during her career, she also

recorded prolifically for Decca over nearly a quarter of a century.

The Italian mezzo-soprano **Ebe Stignani** (1904-1974) studied at the Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella in Naples with Agostino Roche. She made her début in that city in January 1925. The following year she sang in Venice and in October first appeared at the Teatro alla Scala, Milan, in a performance of Beethoven's *Choral* Symphony under Toscanini. Two months later she was Eboli in *Don Carlo*. Over the next four decades her rôles in this house would include Adalgisa in *Norma*, Azucena in *Il trovatore*, Laura in *La Gioconda* and Leonora in *La favorita*. In 1927 Stignani appeared at the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires, for the first of numerous seasons and at the Teatro Municipal, São Paulo. She continued to sing in all the principal houses throughout Italy. Her Covent Garden début in London was as Amneris in the 1937 Coronation season. She would return again in 1939, in 1952 (with Callas in her London début as Norma), 1955, 1957 (again with Callas in *Norma*) and, finally, in 1958 as an unforgettable Azucena at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Her American appearances were limited to San Francisco in 1938 and 1948, and Chicago in 1955 with Callas and Björling in *Il trovatore*. She retired in 1958, dying in Imola in October 1974. She was the finest Italian mezzo-soprano of her generation, and, whilst no great actor, always moved with dignity on the stage. She recorded extensively.

The tenor **Mario del Monaco** (1915-1982) possessed one of the most thrilling and powerful natural voices, which he used with energy and dramatic intensity, and, at times, unremitting volume. Born in Florence, he studied at the Pesaro Conservatorio before being encouraged by the Italian conductor Tullio Serafin to take part in a competition organised by the Rome Opera School, which he won. After six months Del Monaco left, dissatisfied with the teaching,

preferring to learn through recordings. His formal début was as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* at the Teatro Puccini, Rome, in 1941, whilst on leave from the army. He then sang Radamès at the Verona Festival in summer 1946, and in the autumn appeared with the visiting San Carlo company from Naples at Covent Garden in London, where he performed Rodolfo in *La bohème*, Cavaradossi in *Tosca* and Canio in *Pagliacci*. While in London he made his first recordings, for EMI, but these remain unpublished. Continuing to sing in Italy, Del Monaco also appeared on the American continent in Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Mexico City, before making his United States début as Radames in San Francisco in 1950. November that year also saw him make his New York appearance in *Manon Lescaut*. He continued to appear at the Metropolitan until 1959, giving a total of 102 performances in all. In 1960 he toured Russia, singing at the Bolshoy Theatre in Moscow. His return to London was in 1962 as Otello, a rôle he claimed to have sung on 427 occasions. Retiring from the stage in 1973, he died near Venice, buried in his Otello costume. This recording of *Aida* was Del Monaco's first for Decca, for whom he would record complete operas and recitals over a period of almost twenty years.

The baritone **Aldo Protti** (1920-1995) was born in Cremona and studied in Parma. After war service he made his stage début as Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in Pesaro in 1948. Two years later he was engaged to sing Amonasro, and Gérard in *Andrea Chénier* at La Scala, where he would appear until 1963. He sang throughout Italy and also visited Spain, the United States and Switzerland. He was a regular member of the Vienna State Opera from 1957 for the following decade, singing all the main Italian baritone rôles that suited his voluminous tone. His last appearance was in 1989. He took part in two recordings of *Otello* as Iago (1954 and 1961), the title-rôle of *Rigoletto* (1953), as Germont

père in *La traviata* (1954), Cilea's *L'arlesiana* for the now defunct label Colosseum, and *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* for Philips.

Of the bass **Dario Caselli** little is known, but he first sang at La Scala in 1948 in Prokofiev's *Love for Three Oranges*, and later appeared in *Aida*, *Fidelio* and *La forza del destino*. His career was entirely based in Italy. He took part in seven complete operas for Decca during the 1950s, including *Otello*, *Rigoletto*, *Manon Lescaut* and *La fanciulla del West*, all with Mario Del Monaco.

The rôle of the King is sung by **Fernando Corena** (1916-1984), a Swiss bass, born of a Turkish father and Italian mother in Geneva. After making his début in 1947 as Varlaam in *Boris Godunov*, his first Metropolitan Opera engagement was in 1954 where he would sing until 1978. He sang the title-rôle in *Falstaff* at the Edinburgh Festival in 1956 and appeared at Covent Garden in 1960 and 1969. Corena was a fine linguist and a witty and inventive comedian in buffo rôles. He recorded extensively for Decca, from Cimarosa and Mozart to Verdi and Puccini.

The conductor **Alberto Erede** (1908-2001) was well known in both Italy and Britain, and had conducted at Glyndebourne in 1938-39. He was musical director of the short-lived but most enterprising New London Opera Company at the Cambridge Theatre in the late 1940s. He was then hired by the Metropolitan Opera in New York between 1950 and 1954 and became *Generalmusikdirektor* at the Deutsche Oper am Rhein between the years 1958-1962. Erede also conducted *Lohengrin* at Bayreuth in 1968. He recorded extensively, both complete operas and as accompanist to singers and instrumentalists. He was much admired for his excellent training of young singers and was a great believer in ensemble work.

Malcolm Walker

Synopsis

CD 1

Prelude

1 The *Prelude* presents material characteristic of Aida, contrasted with the opposing chant of the priests.

Act I

Scene 1

The scene is set in a hall in the palace of the King at Memphis. On the left and right there is a colonnade with statues and flowering shrubs. At the back is a great gate, through which are seen temples, the palaces of Memphis and the pyramids.

2 Radamès, Captain of the Guards, and the Chief Priest Ramfis are in conversation. Ramfis tells of the rumour that the Ethiopians are again on the warpath, threatening Thebes and the Nile Valley. Radamès asks Ramfis if he has consulted Isis and Ramfis tells him that the goddess has decided the name of the supreme Egyptian commander. He looks fixedly at Radamès and adds that the man chosen is brave and young; now he must tell the King of the decision of Isis.

3 Left alone, Radamès wonders if he is the chosen man. This, after all, is his ambition, to lead soldiers to victory to the acclaim of all Memphis. Then he might return, garlanded with laurels, to his beloved Aida. He sings in praise of his heavenly Aida, the queen of his thoughts. Victorious, he will set her free to breathe again the air of her own land.

4 He is joined by the Egyptian princess, Amneris, who notices the unusual joy that now appears in his regard. She feels jealousy of the woman who has been able to bring him such happiness. Radamès tells her that his heart has been filled with a dream of fame: the

goddess has chosen the leader of the Egyptian army, and he might be the one. Amneris seeks to know whether he has not had another more tender dream. Radamès wonders if she has guessed his secret, while she expresses her own strong suspicion. He catches sight of Aida. Amneris sees his look, but then turns to her slave, greeting her not as a slave but as a sister. Aida fears the approaching war, anxious for her unhappy country, but Amneris asks if this is really the reason for her anxiety. Aside, she bids her slave tremble, and Radamès notices her anger, fearing her suspicious jealousy, while Aida expresses her own misgivings.

5 The King enters, preceded by his guards and followed by Ramfis, ministers, priests and captains. He addresses his nobles. A messenger steps forward and tells how the sacred soil of Egypt has been invaded by barbarous Ethiopians, destroying fields and crops, soon ready to attack Thebes itself. The Ethiopian army is led by a fierce warrior, Amonasro, their king, Aida's father, as she exclaims in an aside. Now, the King declares, is the time for war and Isis has declared the name of the Egyptian leader, Radamès. He is delighted at this answer to his prayers, while Aida is troubled. The ministers and captains shout the name of Radamès in acclamation. The King bids him to the temple of Vulcan, there to receive his weapons.

6 Egyptian heroes, the King goes on, will arise to wreak death on the foreign aggressors. Ramfis proclaims glory to the gods, who rule everything and hold the fate of the warrior in their hands. Aida, in her mind, is divided whether to pray for her lover or for her own country, while Radamès has no doubts about the glory that awaits him. Amneris gives him the glorious banner, to guide and protect him on the path of glory. The assembled ministers and captains shout their defiance of the enemy, for Radamès will return as victor.

7 Aida is left alone, haunted by these last words. She

cannot wish Radamès victorious over her own father, who fights to set her free and restore her to her rightful place: Radamès would be victor over her brothers, stained with their blood, her father brought in chains behind the conqueror's chariot: she begs the gods not to hear her mad words but to let the enemies of her people perish, but then what of her love? How can she wish the death of Radamès? She dare not utter the names of father and lover and trembles in confusion: only death can end her dilemma.

Scene 2

The interior of the temple of Vulcan at Memphis is lit by a mysterious light from above. There are long rows of columns and statues of various gods. In the middle, above a platform covered with carpet, is an altar, surmounted by sacred emblems. The smoke of incense rises from golden tripods. Priests and priestesses stand with Ramfis at the foot of the altar.

¶ A priestess within the temple prays to the powerful god Phthà, her voice soon joined by those of her priestesses, while Ramfis and his priests, before the altar, invoke the god, father and son, source of light, life of the universe. Radamès enters, unarmed. While he approaches the altar, the priestesses carry out a sacred dance. A silver veil is placed over his head.

¶ Ramfis addresses Radamès, entrusting him with the destiny of Egypt. He gives him the sacred sword, tempered by the god, to be a terror to their enemies. Ramfis turns again to the altar, seeking the protection of the gods over the soil of Egypt, a prayer echoed by Radamès. While he is invested in his sacred armour, the priests and priestesses chant their prayer and perform their mystic dance.

Act II

Scene 1

The scene is a room in the quarters of Amneris in the palace.

¶ Amneris is surrounded by slaves, preparing her for the triumphal feast. The slaves sing of a bold warrior, victorious and to be rewarded with love, while Amneris wishes for her lover, to intoxicate her and make her happy. The slaves continue their song of victory and love and there is a dance of little Moorish slaves to entertain the princess. While the slave-girls sing, Amneris expresses her secret thoughts, but is silent when she sees Aida approach, carrying the victor's garland. Amneris still harbours jealous suspicions in her heart.

¶ Feigning kindness, Amneris turns to Aida, promising to be her friend and telling her to be happy, but Aida cannot be happy, far from her own country, with the fate of her father and brothers unknown. Time will heal her sorrows, and a powerful god, love, Amneris assures her. This is more disturbing to Aida, divided in her loyalties between joy and torment, while Amneris looks at her closely in suspicion. She asks her to reveal her secret thoughts and tell her of her love: does she love some hero in the battle? By some quirk of fate the leader of the Egyptians has fallen in battle. Aida, believing what she has been told, is distraught, promising to mourn Radamès for ever, only for Amneris to reveal that the news was false: now, however, she is certain that Aida is her rival. Aida openly admits her love for Radamès, but Amneris threatens her, since this love can only bring death to her: she has power over Aida and has in her heart feelings of hatred and revenge.

¶ Amneris commands Aida to be with her at the triumphal celebration, while the voices of the people are heard celebrating victory. For Aida nothing remains,

her life is a desert and she can only die. Amneris bids her follow, since she will teach her to struggle with her. The people demand war and death to foreigners. Left alone, Aida calls on the gods to pity her suffering.

Scene 2

In the foreground are palm-trees, to the right the temple of Ammon and to the left a throne with a purple canopy above it. In the background is a triumphal gateway.

13 The people crowd round as the King enters, followed by ministers, priests, captains, fan-bearers, standard-bearers, then Amneris with Aida and her slave-girls. The King takes his seat on the throne and Amneris takes up her position on the left of the King. The people sing glory to Egypt and to Isis and their King. The women promise a laurel wreath for the brow of the victor and Ramfis, with his priests, offers thanks to the gods.

14 The Egyptian troops march in, preceded by fanfares, passing before the King. There follow war chariots, standards, sacred vessels and statues of the gods. Dancing girls follow, bearing the spoils of victory.

15 The people sing the praises of the conquerors. Radamès enters under a canopy held by twelve officers.

CD 2

Act II

Scene 2 (continued)

1 The King descends from the throne to embrace Radamès, who bows to Amneris, as she offers him the crown of victory. The King promises him whatever he wants, but he asks first for the prisoners to be brought in. These now enter, escorted by guards, with

Amonasro at the end, dressed as an officer. Aida recognises her father and embraces him, but he whispers to her not to betray him. The King bids him come forward.

2 Amonasro tells the King that he is Aida's father and has fought for his king and country, but his king was killed in battle: if it is a crime to love their country, then they all must die. He asks the King for mercy, for today they are defeated, but tomorrow it may be the Egyptians who suffer. Aida joins the prayer for mercy, while the prisoners echo Amonasro's words. Ramfis and the priests seek the death of the prisoners, while Amneris watches Aida and Radamès, who finds Aida more beautiful in her distress. The King and the people are inclined to mercy, but the priests remain adamant.

3 Radamès now asks the King to grant his request, which the King promises. He asks for life and freedom for the prisoners, a request that surprises Amneris and is opposed by the priests. Ramfis warns the King not to listen, since these prisoners have vengeance in their hearts. Radamès claims that, now Amonasro is dead, the warrior king, the defeated have no hope. Ramfis suggests that at least Aida's father, in fact Amonasro, should be kept as a hostage, and the King agrees to this. As a reward the King grants Radamès the hand of his daughter Amneris in marriage, to the latter's triumphant delight.

4 King and people join in proclaiming glory to Egypt, while the slaves and prisoners praise the clemency of the King. Aida wonders what is now left for her, only the tears of disappointed love, and Radamès, appalled by this turn of fate, declares that the land of Egypt is no recompense for the love of Aida. Amneris, meanwhile, is delighted at the apparent fulfilment of her dreams and Ramfis prays that the fates be propitious over Egypt. Amonasro takes the chance to tell Aida to take courage, since revenge is at hand.

Act III

Introduction. By the banks of the Nile granite rocks are seen, from which palm-trees grow. Above the rocks is seen the temple of Isis, half hidden by foliage. It is a starry night and the moon shines brightly.

5 The voices of priests and priestesses are heard from the temple, singing to Isis, immortal mother and wife of Osiris. A boat comes to the shore and Amneris disembarks, with Ramfis, some of the court women, veiled, and guards. Ramfis addresses Amneris, bidding her to the temple on the eve of her marriage, to seek divine favour. She says that she will pray that Radamès give her his whole heart, as she gives hers to him. They enter the temple, as the priests and priestesses continue their hymn.

6 Aida enters cautiously, apparently summoned by Radamès and wondering what he will say to her, since this must be their last farewell. She remembers the blue skies, the sweet breezes, green hills and flowing rivers of her own country, which she will never see again.

7 To Aida's surprise, Amonasro approaches and tells her he knows of her troubles, with the daughter of Pharaoh, ruler of their hated enemies, her rival in love. She laments that she is in their power, but Amonasro assures her that she can again have country, throne and love: their people are ready to attack and Aida herself can discover from Radamès the route of the Egyptian armies. She is horrified at the suggestion that she should betray Radamès. Amonasro then calls on the cohorts of Egypt to destroy his people and country. Aida begs him to pity her, but he continues to tell her of the horrors of war that her country will suffer and from which she can save her people: otherwise she will have the curse of her mother and be disowned by her father, to remain an Egyptian slave. Aida begs again for pity, but he tells her that she must have the courage to help her country. He withdraws and hides among the palm-trees.

8 Radamès now joins Aida. She asks him what he wants, since he is to marry Amneris. He assures her that he loves her alone: she must not doubt his love. She asks how he can defy the King and brave the anger of the priests, but Radamès tells her that danger again threatens, for the Ethiopians have again invaded Egypt: he will earn the gratitude of the King and the reward he wants. Aida warns him to beware the vengeful fury of Amneris, which will fall on her, her father and everyone. Radamès promises to defend her, but Aida tells him he cannot: one way is open to him, flight.

9 Aida tells Radamès that they must escape together to a new country, where they can love each other.

10 He exclaims on the idea of seeking refuge in a foreign land, abandoning his own country, the altars of his gods, the land where he won glory. She accuses him of not loving her, if he will not join her in flight: he must go to the altar with Amneris. Radamès gives way: let them fly together from these walls to the desert, where stars will shine upon their love. Aida adds her nostalgic memories of her native land, where they can be happy together. Together they dream of escape. As they are about to hurry away, Aida pauses. She asks him the route to be taken by the Egyptian armies, apparently so that they may avoid them in their flight. He tells her that the approach chosen will remain unguarded that night and she elicits from him the information that the army will attack through the gorges of Napata.

11 Amonasro emerges from hiding, announcing that his men will be there waiting. In reply to the question of Radamès, he reveals his identity as Aida's father, Amonasro, king of Ethiopia. Radamès is aghast and cannot believe what he has heard. When assured by Aida of the truth of the claim, he is horrified at his own treachery. Amonasro declares this the work of fate and invites Radamès to cross the Nile with him and join the Ethiopians, to be rewarded by the hand of Aida. At this

point Amneris, Ramfis, priests and guards emerge from the temple. Amneris declares Radamès a traitor, while Aida recognises the power of her rival. Amonasro threatens Amneris with his dagger, but is prevented from killing her by Radamès. Ramfis calls the guards, while Radamès tells Aida and her father to escape, prepared himself to stay.

Act IV

Scene 1

The scene is a hall in the palace of the King. To the left a great door leads to a subterranean court of justice, while a passage on the right leads to the prison of Radamès.

[2] Amneris crouches by the door, regretting the escape of her rival: Radamès will be condemned as a traitor, although he is not, but yet he wanted to escape with Aida: she would save him, if she could.

[3] Radamès is brought in by the guards, and Amneris foresees his condemnation by the priests: yet he can still save himself and she will intercede with her father for him. Radamès vows he will say nothing in his defence. Amneris tells him that if he does not defend himself, he must die, but he would welcome death. She urges him to choose life, through her love: she will sacrifice country, throne and life for him. He, however, sacrificed his country and his honour for Aida, who is now dead. Amneris assures him that Aida is still alive: her father was killed, but she survived. She asks him to abjure his love for Aida, if she is to save him, but that he cannot do, preferring to die. Angry, she threatens revenge, if he rejects her love, but he declares death a great good: he has no fear of human anger. Amneris, however, still threatens revenge.

[4] Radamès is taken away, escorted by the guards. Amneris, now alone, sits, in despair, wishing to save Radamès and blaming herself for his capture. She turns

and sees the priests crossing to enter the subterranean court, exclaiming on these inexorable ministers of death. She covers her face with her hands, blaming herself for the arrest of Radamès. Ramfis and the priests seek divine guidance, while Amneris prays for the release of Radamès, who is now taken down to the court, to her increased dismay.

[5] Accused by the priests, Radamès makes no answer. The accusers renew their demands and Amneris her prayers for mercy, while Radamès remains silent and is condemned to be immured, living, in the tomb. Amneris pleads for him, but in vain, and she ends by cursing them, as they go out.

Scene 2

The scene is divided into two levels, the upper representing the interior of the temple of Vulcan, splendid in its gold and light. The lower reveals an underground chamber, with long arcades disappearing into the darkness. There are great statues of Isis and Osiris with crossed hands, supporting the pillars of the court above. Radamès is there, on the steps leading to the chamber. Two priests above are sealing the entrance with a stone.

[6] Radamès prepares for death in the tomb, never to see the light again or his beloved Aida. At this moment Aida reveals herself.

[7] Aida explains how she has hidden herself there, anticipating his death, and here she too will die, in his arms. Radamès is overcome with emotion, that she, so pure and beautiful, will die for love of him and perish in the flower of her youth. Almost in a trance, she tells him to see the angel of death drawing near: Heaven now awaits them. The voices of the priests are heard from the temple above, praying to great Phtha, a sad song, Aida says, the triumph of the priests, their hymn of death. Radamès tries to move the stone that seals the chamber, but in vain.

18 Together they bid the earth farewell, while the priests continue their chant, and Amneris, dressed in mourning, appears in the temple, throwing herself upon the stone that seals the underground vault. In the crypt

below Aida dies in the arms of her lover, while Amneris prays to Isis for them and the priests still call on the great god Phtha.

Keith Anderson

Producer's Note

The present transfer was made from British LP pressings which have been declicked and re-equalised. The original master tape contains several instances of overload and distortion (e.g., during the Amneris/Radamès scene in Act IV) that cannot entirely be fixed.

It has long been rumoured that the part of the High Priestess in Act I was sung by Suzanne Danco. Decca were usually very thorough in listing credits, even for the most minor rôle, so this omission would seem to lend credence to the theory that they were “protecting” one of their star sopranos who had agreed to sing a small part.

Mark Obert-Thorn

ADD

**Playing
Time**
2:24:33

Giuseppe
VERDI
(1813-1901)
Aida

8.110129-30

2 CDs



8.110129-30

VERDI: Aida

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Un messagero Piero de Palma

Chorus and Orchestra of
the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome

Alberto Erede

Recorded August, 1952 in Rome
First issued as Decca LXT 2735 through 2737

Made in Rome in July 1952, a year after the equally acclaimed *La bohème* (Naxos 8.110252-53) and *Madama Butterfly* (Naxos 8.110254-55), this recording features a dazzling array of some of the finest Italian singers. The great, peerless *lirico spinto* soprano, Renata Tebaldi is here partnered for the first time with the tenor, Mario del Monaco, who possessed one of the most thrilling and powerful natural voices. They are arguably in fresher voice than in their later stereo remake. The finest Italian mezzo-soprano of her generation, Ebe Stignani is fondly remembered for her stage appearances with Maria Callas in *Norma* and Callas and Jussi Björling in *Il trovatore*.

CD 1	67:52	CD 2	76:41
1 Prelude	4:13	1-4 Act II, Scene 2 (concluded)	13:09
2-7 Act I, Scene 1	24:26	5-11 Act III	31:23
8-9 Act I, Scene 2	10:30	12-15 Act IV, Scene 1	20:55
10-12 Act II, Scene 1	16:01	16-18 Act IV, Scene 2	11:14
13-15 Act II, Scene 2 (part 1)	12:42		

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Mark Obert-Thorn

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A complete track list can be found in the booklet
Cover Image: *Inside the Sanctuary*, stage set for *Aida* by Sanquirico
(The Art Archive / Museo Teatrale alla Scala Milan / Dagli Orti (A))

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