

OPERA101 – MONDAY, MAY 11 & 18 – 7:30PM IN ENCORE

3 TENORS LIVE! WEDNESDAY, MAY 20 – 7:30PM IN ENCORE

OPERA AT
RIDERWOOD
ENCORE OPERA NOTES
MAY 8, 2026

AIDA

NEXT WEEK IN ENCORE
May 15, 2026

TOSCA
Giacomo Puccini

Composer: Giuseppe Verdi Librettist: Antonio Ghislanzoni

In Italian with English Subtitles – 163 minutes

Notes compiled by John Szabo

Opera at Riderwood's Opera 101 month continues with the spectacular 1981 San Francisco Opera must-see production of Giuseppe Verdi's enduring masterpiece "Aida," a marvelous blend of human emotion and grand spectacle: the tale of a princess captive in Egypt who is in love with the hero who conquered her country. Margaret Price in the title role is in superb voice throughout, and Luciano Pavarotti makes a triumphant debut as her doomed lover, especially with their showcase arias, such as "Celeste Aida" and "O Patria Mia."

Stefania Toczyska is a compelling Amneris and Simon Estes is a powerful Amonasro, with assured conducting from Garcia Navarro.

Cast

Margaret Price – Aida

Radames – Luciano Pavarotti

Amonasro – Simon Estes

Amneris – Stefania Toczyska

King of Egypt – Kevin Langan

Ramfis – Kurt Rydl

Garcia Navarro – Conductor of Chorus and Orchestra of the San Francisco Opera

ACT I - Egypt, during the reign of the pharaohs.

At the royal palace in Memphis, the high priest Ramfis tells the warrior Radamès that Ethiopia is preparing another attack against Egypt. Radamès hopes to command his army. He is in love with Aida, the Ethiopian slave of Princess Amneris, the king's daughter, and he believes that victory in the war would enable

him to free her and marry her. But Amneris loves Radamès, and when the three meet, she jealously senses his feelings for Aida. A messenger tells the King of Egypt and the assembled priests and soldiers that the Ethiopians are advancing. The king names Radamès to lead the army, and all join in a

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patriotic anthem. Left alone, Aida is torn between her love for Radamès and loyalty to her native country, where her father, Amonasro, is king. She prays to the gods for mercy. In the temple of Vulcan, the priests consecrate Radamès to the service of the god. Ramfis orders him to protect the homeland.

ACT II

Ethiopia has been defeated, and Amneris waits for the triumphant return of Radamès. When Aida approaches, the princess sends away her other attendants so that she can learn her slave's private feelings. She first pretends that Radamès has fallen in battle, then says he is still alive. Aida's reactions leave no doubt that she loves Radamès. Amneris, certain she will be victorious over her rival, leaves for the triumphal procession.

At the city gates the king and Amneris observe the celebrations and crown Radamès with a victor's wreath. Captured Ethiopians are led in. Among them is Amonasro, Aida's father, who signals his daughter not to reveal his identity as king. Radamès is impressed by Amonasro's eloquent plea for mercy and asks for the death sentence on the prisoners to be overruled and for them to be freed. The king grants his request but keeps Amonasro in custody. The king declares that as a victor's reward, Radamès will have Amneris's hand in marriage.

ACT III

On the eve of Amneris's wedding, Ramfis and Amneris enter a temple on the banks of the Nile to pray. Aida, who is waiting for Radamès, is lost in thoughts of her homeland.

Amonasro suddenly appears. Invoking Aida's sense of duty, he makes her agree to find out from Radamès which route

the Egyptian army will take to invade Ethiopia. Amonasro hides as Radamès arrives and assures Aida of his love. They dream about their future life together, and Radamès agrees to run away with her. Aida asks him about his army's route, and just as he reveals the secret, Amonasro emerges from his hiding place. When he realizes that Amonasro is the Ethiopian king, Radamès is horrified by what he has done. While Aida and Amonasro try to calm him, Ramfis and Amneris step out of the temple. Father and daughter are able to escape, but Radamès surrenders to the priests.

ACT IV

Radamès awaits trial as a traitor, believing Aida to be dead. Even after he learns that she has survived, he rejects an offer by Amneris to save him if he renounces Aida. When he is brought before the priests, he refuses to answer their accusations and is condemned to be buried alive. Amneris begs for mercy, but the judges will not change their verdict. She curses the priests. Aida has hidden in the vault to share Radamès's fate. They express their love for the last time while Amneris, in the temple above, prays for Radamès's soul.

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