

Nabucco

GIUSEPPE VERDI

1841

SUNG IN ITALIAN
APPROXIMATE RUNNING TIME: 145 minutes

This opera is dear to all Italians and contains the massively famous aria "Va, pensiero" that everyone in the peninsula knows almost by heart. At the centre of an intricate politic impeachment, Abigail is, by far, the flashiest among Verdi's heroin.

This Verdi's opera in 4 acts to a libretto written by Temistocle Solera is known to the general public for the sublime arias such as "Va, pensiero", that has become a very powerful ode to freedom or "Coro degli Schiavi Ebrei". When the opera premiered, the political message it brought was very relevant and easy to identify with, as the despair of the Jewish people and their resistance against tyrant Nabuccodonosor would mirror that of the Milanese people against the Austrian invaders. Beyond the message though, the opera is, above all, an interesting revise of Alfieri's "I Deliri di Saul". The opera premiered at La Scala in Milan on 9 March 1842, gaining instant success.



MAIN CHARACTERS

Nabucco, King of Babylon (baritone)

Abigail, slave and supposed Nabucco's daughter (soprano)

Zaccaria, High Priest of Jerusalem (basso)

Fenena, Nabucco's daughter (soprano)

Ismaele, King of Jerusalem's nephew (tenor)

THE PLOT

The whole story rotates around the biblical episode of the Jewish captivity in Babylon.

Act 1

Nabucco's army annihilates the Israelites but they manage to take his daughter Fenena into captivity. While High Priest Zaccaria keeps the girl as a hostage, she falls in love with the priest's assistant Ismaele, in love with the girl as well. Supposed Nabucco's elder daughter Abigail also has feeling for Ismaele and offers to petition her alleged father on the Israelites' behalf if Ismaele returns her love. Nabucco enters and Zaccaria threatens him with killing his daughter but Ismaele intervenes saving her and the Babylonians captivate the Israelites, which blame and curse Ismaele.

Act2

In the Babylonian palace Abigail finds a document proving she is not Nabucco's daughter but the daughter of slaves and goes mad over learning Fenena has been appointed to the throne and commanded the Israelites prisoners were released. While Zaccaria prays with his people, Nabucco mocks him and God, and gets struck by a lightning. Abigail riches the crown that had fallen to the ground following the lightning and puts it on.

Act3

The scene opens on the hanging gardens of Babylon where Abigail, sitting on the thrones, receives an Israelites' death warrant which she tricks her father into sign. By the Euphrates's banks, the Israelites, still in captivity, long for their homeland singing to ease the pain and High Priest Zaccaria comforts them stating God will punish Nabucco and set them free.

Act 4

Nabucco learns that Fenena has convert to Judaism out of love for Ismaele and is therefore going to be affected by the death warrant. That is when Nabucco prays the Israelite God begging for its help and forgiveness and right then official Abdallo enters and sets him free. Fenena is waiting for the execution but Nabucco intervenes and command his soldier to smash the statue of Belos to the ground. Abigail, instead, repents and commits suicide. Right before dying she begs Fenena to forgive her and gives her blessings to the couple.

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reservation@music-opera.com

+33(0)1 53 59 39 29

16 rue Bleue – 75009 PARIS - France