



Aida is set in ancient Egypt during the time of the Pharaohs, about 2000 BC. Egypt is at war with Ethiopia, and has taken prisoners that serve as slaves. The main characters are:

Aida, an Ethiopian princess who is now a slave (soprano)

Radames (RAH-duh- mees), Captain of the Egyptian guard (tenor)

Amneris, an Egyptian princess (mezzo-soprano)

King of Egypt, father of Amneris (bass)

Amanasro, King of Ethiopia and father of Aida, also captured by the Egyptians (baritone)

Ramphis, high Priest of Egypt (bass)

Notice that the assigned voice parts for each character reflect something about their personalities.

Aida, the Ethiopian princess, has fallen in love with Radames, who should be her enemy. Radames has fallen in love with her, as well. Radames does not know Aida is a princess. He has just captured her father, the king, but does not know it, since Amanasro is disguised as a peasant. Amneris, the Egyptian princess, is also in love with Radames, and has been for a long time. She is promised to him after his victory in battle. Amneris prepares for her wedding on the banks of the sacred Nile River while Aida and Radames meet to say a final farewell. Aida's father wants her to spy for Ethiopia and find out the Egyptian army's battle plan, but instead, Aida and Radames plan their escape together. Unfortunately, they are overheard when he accidentally tells her part of the battle plan. He is arrested, and will be tried for treason. Aida and her father escape.

Amneris tells Radames she can save him from execution by being buried alive in a tomb if he will give up his love for Aida. He refuses, and is led off to his horrible death. In the tomb, Radames hears a noise and Aida reveals herself, having come to the tomb to die with him. Outside the tomb, Amneris prays for Radames, while the two lovers sing of their love and bid farewell to life on earth.

There are at least four famous arias from *Aida*, as outlined below:

In Act 1

Celeste Aida (Heavenly Aida), sung by the tenor, Radames, about his love for Aida. Ritorna vincitor (Return Victorious), sung by the soprano, Aida, who is torn between love for her father and for Radames

In Act 3

O patria mia (O my native land), Aida remembers her happy life in Ethiopia

In Act 4

O terra, addio (O Earth, farewell), The final duet between Aida and Radames