

Fondazione
ARENA DI VERONA

**This is the program booklet
in Easy English
for the opera Nabucco
by Giuseppe Verdi**



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Title

The title of this opera is Nabucco.

Opera is a way to tell a story with music, actors singing lyrics and sometimes with dancing.

Nabucco has 4 acts.

An act is a part of an opera or a play, like the chapter of a book.

Composer

The composer of Nabucco is **Giuseppe Verdi**.

A composer writes music for an opera.

Giuseppe Verdi was an Italian composer during the 19th century.

He composed Nabucco in 1841.

Libretto

Temistocle Solera

wrote the lyrics of Nabucco.

The lyrics of an opera are called librettos and the writer is called a librettist.

Temistocle Solera was an Italian librettist. He wrote librettos to several of Giuseppe Verdi's first operas.

Characters

The characters in an opera sing songs.
Some of the songs are for voices in a high pitch.
They are called sopranos, mezzo-sopranos
and altos. Some are in low pitch for tenors,
baritones and bass.

The characters in the opera Nabucco are:

- **Nabucco**

Nabucco is king of Babylonia.
Babylonia was a country
2 thousand years ago.
Nabucco is a baritone.

- **Abigaille**

Abigaille is a slave.
But people think
she is Nabucco's first daughter.
Abigaille is a soprano.

- **Fenena**

Fenena is Nabucco's daughter.
Fenena is a soprano.

- **Ismaele**
Ismaele is the nephew
of the king of Jerusalem.
He is Jewish.
Ismaele is a tenor.

- **Zaccaria**
Zaccaria is High Priest
of the Jewish people.
He is the most important Jewish priest.
Zaccaria is a bass.

- **The High Priest of Belo**
In English he is sometimes called
the High Priest of Baal.
He is the most important priest
in Babylonia.
The High Priest of Belo is a bass.

- **Anna**
Anna is Zaccaria's sister.
Anna is a soprano.

- **Abdallo**
Abdallo is the leader
of the Babylonian soldiers.
He is loyal to king Nabucco.
Abdallo is a tenor.

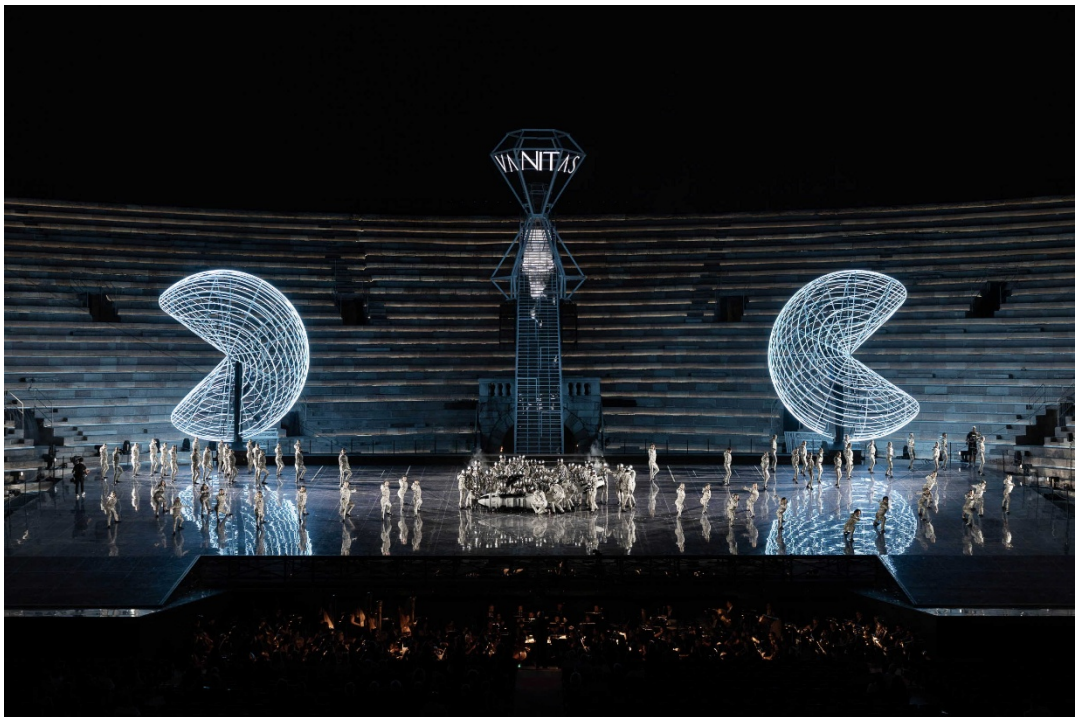
Other characters in Nabucco are:

- **Babylonian soldiers**
- **Jewish soldiers**
- **Levites**
The Levites were men who helped the priest during a religious service.
- **Magi**
He is a priest in Babylonia.
- **The Jewish virgins**
They are young Jewish girls who are part of the choir in the opera.
- **Babylonian women**
- **The people**

Photos from Nabucco

In this photo you can see an example of the scenography of Nabucco.

Scenography is the decor and all the objects on the stage during a performance.



On the sides of the stage there are 2 blue spheres. During the show, the spheres come closer and move away.

At the end of the opera,
the 2 spheres are joined together
to show peace.
In this photo you see
the **Jewish virgins** and **Abigaille**.



The Jewish virgins are inside
a prison of two metal cages.
Abigaille is standing to the right
outside the cages.
She is wearing a red and blue coat.
Two Babylonian soldiers
are standing behind Abigaille.

In this photo you see
Abigaille and **Nabucco**.



Nabucco is sitting on his knees.

Abigaille stands behind him.

She looks up.

Abigaille is wearing
a blue and red coat.

In this photo you see

**the Jewish
people.**



Some Jews are standing.
Other Jews are kneeling
or lying on the stage.

In the background is a ladder.
At the top of the ladder is an hourglass
with the word "Vanitas".
"Vanitas" means emptiness.

The story of Nabucco

The opera Nabucco tells the story of the war between the Jews and the Babylonians.

The two people are very different.

The Jews pray to one God.

The Babylonians pray to many gods.

The opera has 4 acts.

Here is a summary of what happens in the different acts.

Act 1

The Jews live in Jerusalem.

Nabucco is the king of Babylonia.

Babylonia is an enemy country.

Nabucco attacks Jerusalem.

He wants to defeat the Jewish people and take over Jerusalem.

The Jews hide in the temple.

A temple is the place where the Jews pray.

Zaccaria is the Jewish High Priest.

He does not want war.

Therefore, Zaccaria kidnaps Fenena.

Fenena is Nabucco's second daughter.

Zaccaria holds Fenena prisoner.

He hopes that will stop the war.

Zaccaria tells Nabucco
he will free Fenena if the war is stopped.

Ismaele is the Jewish king's nephew.

He and Fenena love each other.

Ismaele wants to save Fenena
and escape with her.

Abigaille and Fenena are sisters.

Abigaille also loves Ismaele
and she hates her sister.

Ismaele lets Fenena out of prison.

Nabucco arrives in Jerusalem
and destroys the temple.

The Jews are very angry

at Ismaele for letting Fenena free.

The Jews can no longer
free Fenena in exchange for peace.

Act 2

Nabucco leaves Babylonia
and when he is gone Fenena is in power.

She wants to free
all the Jewish prisoners.

But the High Priest of Belo
does not want this to happen.

He wants Abigaille to be queen.

Therefore, the High Priest of Belo
tells a lie.

He says that Nabucco is dead.

Since Abigaille is Nabucco's oldest daughter
she will become the queen.

One day, Abigaille finds a secret paper.

The paper says
she is not Nabucco's daughter.
She is a Jewish slave.

No one must know this secret.

If people know,
she cannot be queen.

Fenena believes that Nabucco is dead.
She fights against the Babylonians,
but Abigaille takes the crown from Fenena.

Nabucco returns.
He takes the crown from Abigaille.

Nabucco goes mad.
He says that he is the king
and he is god.
God strikes him with lightning
for saying he is a god.
Nabucco loses his mind,
he turns insane.

Act 3

Now Abigaille is the queen of Babylonia.
She wants to fight against the Jews.
Abigaille wants to kill Fenena
so she can remain as the queen.

Nabucco asks Abigaille
not to kill Fenena.

He tells Abigaille
that she is not his daughter.

Abigaille gets mad
and puts Nabucco in prison.

Act 4

Nabucco is sorry about calling himself god.

He apologizes to the God of the Jews.

Nabucco is sane again.

He promises to rebuild
the Jewish temple.

Abdallo is the leader
of the Babylonian soldiers.
He frees Nabucco.

The Babylonians want
Nabucco to be their king again.

Nabucco frees Fenena
and all the Jewish prisoners.
Then he decides that Babylonians
must pray to the Jewish God.

In the end, Abigaille drinks poison.
She asks for forgiveness
and then she dies.

The Jews and the Babylonians
share the same God
and they make peace.

Director's Notes

Nabucco is the third opera
Giuseppe Verdi composed.

In this version of Nabucco,
the scenography is very modern.
Scenography is the decor
and all the objects on the stage
during a performance.

The 2 blue spheres on the stage
move closer and further away.
They represent the struggle between:

- the Jews and the Babylonians
- faith and reason
- heart and mind.

In the center of the stage is an hourglass.
The hourglass represents time.

The costumes are also very modern
in this version of Nabucco.
One example
is the Babylonian soldiers' costumes.
They are inspired by the sport of fencing.
In fencing
2 people fight with swords.

Stefano Poda is the director
of this version of Nabucco.

A director decides
how the actors should act, what to do
and how they should stand or walk
on the stage.

Stefano Poda is from the city of Trento in Italy.
He has directed many operas
in many countries around the world.



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The program booklet in Easy English for the opera Nabucco by Giuseppe Verdi

You can find the online version of this booklet
on the website of the “Arena for All” project

<https://www.arena.it/en/arena-verona-opera-festival/arena-per-tutti/>



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