

NABUCCO

Composed by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Temistocle Solera

First Performed : Milan, Teatro alla Scala, March 9, 1842.

Act I

The Hebrews have been conquered by the armies of the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. The great priest Zachary attempts to restore their courage by revealing that he has succeeded in capturing the enemy king's daughter, Fenena. But Ismael, nephew to the king of Jerusalem, has fallen in love with the young girl. While he tries to deliver her, Abigail, the slave, and Nebuchadnezzar arrive. Zachary tries to kill Fenena, but Ismael prevents him. Hebrews curse him and accuse him of treason.

Act II

In Nebuchadnezzar's absence, Fenena reigns. Abigail plots to kill her and seize the throne. Meanwhile, the great priest Zachary converts Fenena to Judaism. Abigail is about to reach her goal when she hears false news that Nebuchadnezzar is dead. But the king returns unexpectedly and proclaims himself God in front of a shocked audience.

Act III

Abigail has finally succeeded to dethrone Nebuchadnezzar, and reigns as a fierce tyrant. She decides to sacrifice the captive Hebrews. Fenena, who has converted to the enemies' religion, will die as well. Lamenting their martyrdom, the Hebrews sing the hymn "Va pensiero."

Act IV

The king, to reconquer his kingdom, forms an alliance with the Assyrians and declares war to Babylon. He arrives in time to save his daughter. Abigail kills herself, but, before dying, she begs forgiveness from Fenena and bids Nebuchadnezzar to allow his daughter to marry Ismael.