



AIDA

by Giuseppe Verdi

A monumental season opener

[Musical excerpts / TV ad](#)

Montreal, August 22, 2016 – The Opéra de Montréal kicks off its 37th season with the great pomp that only opera can deliver by presenting Giuseppe Verdi's monumental *Aida*, which will carry us off to ancient Egypt. From the radiant brilliance of the famous "triumphal march" to the lyricism of its arias and ensembles, this drama of uncommon intensity will be brought to life by an international cast. Stage direction has been entrusted to François Racine, well known for his ability to combine aesthetics and drama, and his ease at bringing out the multiple facets of each character. Performances of this Opéra de Montréal production are on **September 17, 20, 22, and 24, 2016, at 7:30 pm.**

AN INTERNATIONAL CAST

Russian soprano **Anna Markarova** and Bulgarian tenor **Kamen Chanev** portray the two lovers, Aida and Radames. In the role of Amneris, daughter of the King of Egypt, is Russian contralto **Olesya Petrova**. The other roles feature Bulgarian baritone **Kiril Manolov** as Amonasro, Aida's father and the King of the Ethiopians, Canadian **Phillip Ens** as Ramfis, Belarusian **Anatoli Sivko** as the King of Egypt, ***Myriam Leblanc** as the Priestess, and ***Keven Geddes** as the messenger. As prepared by **Claude Webster**, the Opéra de Montréal Chorus has a starring role in *Aida*. American conductor **Paul Nadler** returns to lead the Orchestre Métropolitain, following his success here with *Turandot* in 2014. The stage director is **François Racine** and the choreographer, **Noëlle-Émilie Desbiens**. Sets are by **Claude Girard** and **Bernard Uzan**, with costumes also by **Claude Girard**. Lighting is by **Éric W. Champoux**. The opera is sung in Italian with English and French surtitles.

*Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal

THE STORY: FOR LOVE OR COUNTRY?

Aida, a young Ethiopian slave to Amneris, daughter of the King of Egypt, must choose between her love for Radames, the new commander of the Egyptian army, and her loyalty to her father—king of the Ethiopians—and to her people, who are at war with the Egyptians. The jealous Amneris, who also desires Radames, makes the situation even more complicated. Caught in a love triangle—and a political quandary—, will the young couple manage to survive?

THE WORK: "A SPLENDID MISE EN SCÈNE"

In 1869, the Khedive of Egypt asked Verdi to compose a hymn in honour of the opening of the Suez Canal. Verdi declined, on the grounds that he did not compose occasional music. At the same time, while seeking a subject for his next opera, Verdi also refused offers from his publisher Giulio Ricordi and his friend, French impresario and librettist Camille du Locle. Nothing seemed to be what he was looking for. The Khedive decided to give it another go, this time asking Verdi to write an opera to

celebrate the opening of the first opera house in Africa, the Cairo Opera. French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette came up with an idea inspired by ancient Egypt, which he sent to Du Locle in April 1870, without having signed it. Du Locle presented it to Verdi, who responded with enthusiasm, describing it in a letter as "a splendid mise en scène." Verdi and Du Locle reworked the scenario, which was then set to verse by Italian librettist Antonio Ghislanzoni. Verdi was involved in the writing of the libretto, sending several letters to Ghislanzoni in which he described his dramatic vision of the work and his ideas regarding the versification of certain scenes. The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War in July 1870 delayed the premiere of the opera, which finally took place with great success on December 24, 1871.

THE MUSIC

Musically, *Aida* expertly brings together tradition and innovation. Verdi employs the lyrical conventions of Italian opera, incorporating some local colour that gives the work its exoticism, as can be heard in Aida's aria "O patria mia," which is accompanied by a plaintive oboe. The opera is also unique in that it includes five duets that are each handled in their own specific way. In a letter to Ghislanzoni, Verdi wrote of the importance of what he referred to as "la parola scenica" (the theatrical word), which "sculpts the situation, making it stand out cleanly and plainly." The religiosity and power of *Aida*'s choruses have led several people to compare them to Verdi's *Requiem*, which he wrote shortly afterwards, in 1874. This monumental work transports us to another world, to a distant and imaginary past... where the emotions are nevertheless very real.

Opera: *Aida*, by Giuseppe Verdi

Genre: opera

Structure: 3 acts

Language: Italian with English and French surtitles

Libretto: Antonio Ghislanzoni, after a scenario by Auguste Mariette, revised by Camille du Locle

Premiere: Cairo Opera, December 24, 1871

Production: Opéra de Montréal

Last presented at the Opéra de Montréal: May 2006

PREOPERA – GET TO THE HEART OF THE OPERAS

To learn more about each opera on the program, join musicologist Pierre Vachon prior to each performance for an introduction to the work and its context, illustrated with musical excerpts. In the Piano Nobile at Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Place des Arts, at 6:30 pm. Duration: 30 minutes. Free for subscribers and \$5 for non-subscribers (tickets on sale at the Place des Arts box office on performance days).

SEPTEMBER AT THE OPERA

Gala Concert

5th Anniversary – Choeur d'été de Montréal. Director: Dany Wiseman.

Program: Symphony No. 2 "Lobgesang" Op. 52 by Mendelssohn, opera choruses and arias.

Guests: Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal.

Date: September 10, at 7:30 pm

Venue: Immaculée-Conception Church, 1855 Rachel Street East, Montreal

[Info](#)

NEW: The coOpera Toolbox!

The Opéra de Montréal is launching its coOpera toolbox, which allows elementary schools throughout Quebec to experience the [coOpera](#) project in a condensed time period. INFO: Pierre Vachon, pvachon@operademontreal.com or 514.985.2222, extension 2237.

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OFF-SERIES

Sorrow, by Colin Stetson, co-produced by Pop Montreal and the Opéra de Montréal; and **Weill x 5**, with Caroline Gélinas, mezzo-soprano, Martin Dubé, pianist, staged by Isabeau Proulx-Lemire.

Date: Friday, September 23, 2016 at 8 pm

Venue: Ukrainian Federation, Montreal

[Info](#)



SPOTLIGHT ON THE VOCAL ARTS

For a fourth season, the Opéra de Montréal is continuing its association with Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec to present three free concert-talks on the vocal arts. The first will take place on **Friday, September 30, 2016, at 7 pm** as part of the Festival international de la littérature.

Friday, September 30: Librettists for an evening (in French)

Their names are Denys Arcand, Gilbert Turp, Evelyne de la Chenelière, Hélène Dorion, and Charles Binamé. They will take part in an unusual exercise: rewriting the words of their favourite opera arias. During the event, join Hélène Dorion, musicologist Pierre Vachon, and singers from the Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal in exploring the writers' process and sensibilities... and get to hear both the original and new versions of the arias!

Guest artists: Hélène Dorion and the singers of the Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal

Host: Pierre Vachon

Venue: Auditorium of the Grande bibliothèque, Berri-UQÀM metro

Duration: 90 minutes

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All operas are performed in their original language with bilingual surtitles projected above the stage.

SALLE WILFRID-PELLETIER, PLACE DES ARTS (PDA)

VERDI – *Aida* | September 17, 20, 22, 24, 2016 at 7:30 pm

MOZART – *Don Giovanni* | November 12, 15, 17, 19, 2016 at 7:30 pm

POULENC – *Dialogues des carmélites* | January 28, 31, February 2, 4, 2017 at 7:30 pm

BILODEAU – *Another Brick In The Wall – The Opera* | March 11, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 2017 at 7:30 pm
(Official programming: Montreal's 375th Anniversary)

PUCCINI – *La bohème* | May 20, 23, 25, 27, 2017 at 7:30 pm

Graphic design for the Opéra de Montréal's 2016-2017 campaign: Brad

TICKETS

SUBSCRIPTIONS

to 4 / 5 operas available now starting at \$169 and on sale until November 19, 2016.

Only at the Opéra de Montréal box office: 514-985-2258 • 1 877 385-2222

SINGLE TICKETS

Place des Arts box office: 514-842-2112 • 1 866 842-2112

Starting at \$20 and on sale **as of August 2, 2016**

NEW THIS SEASON

1. **Family package:** A new family-friendly outing to prepare the audience of tomorrow, hosted by the Yoopa channel's charming and curious Théo.
2. **My First Time Package:** Because you never forget your first time! Backstage tour, snacks, show...
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5. **Young Associates:** cocktails, networking

[Info: operademontreal.com/tickets](http://operademontreal.com/tickets)

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Opéra de Montréal

Founded in 1980 and based in Montreal, the Opéra de Montréal is the largest francophone opera company in North America. Last year, close to 50,000 spectators made their way through the doors at the Opéra de Montréal, which is under the direction of General Director Pierre Dufour and Artistic Director Michel Beaulac. Its season is made up of four operas, a production by the Atelier lyrique, and several outreach activities. The Opéra is a key player in the city's economic, cultural, and social development as, each season, it maintains working relationships with over 360 local businesses, and hires no less than 800 artists and craftspeople. Close to 80% of the artists appearing at the company are Canadians.

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