



CONTENTS

INFORMATION DESK

Producer's Note2

THE PRODUCTION WING

Aida Synopsis3

Musical Numbers/Character Breakdown4

Aida Creators5

THE COLLECTIONS

HISTORY Exhibition8

MATH & SCIENCE Exhibition14

ARTS & CULTURE Exhibition20

SOCIAL STUDIES Exhibition26

COMMUNICATIONS Exhibition32

Attending the Theatre38

Resource Gallery39

PRODUCERS' NOTE Using the Guide

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF *AIDA*. The story at the center of this contemporary *Aida* is the legend that became the libretto of Giuseppe Verdi's opera of the same name. This classic tale of forbidden love, set against the backdrop of Ancient Egypt and enhanced by the extraordinary talents of its composer and lyricist, Elton John and Tim Rice, makes *Aida* a unique and special educational tool.

By using the study guide, you will see how *Aida* exposes us to the past (History), expands our visual and verbal vocabulary (Language Arts), illuminates the human condition (Behavioral Studies), demonstrates a process of analysis and implementation (Math and Science), and encourages creative thinking and expression (The Arts).

The study guide was developed as a series of lesson plans that, although inspired by and themed around *Aida*, can also accompany class study of other literary, theatrical, or historical works. To assist you in preparing your presentation of each lesson, we have included an objective; an excerpt from the lyrics of the Broadway production of *Aida*; a discussion topic; a writing assignment; and an interactive class activity. A reproducible handout accompanies each lesson unit which contains an essay question; a creative exercise; and an "after hours activity" that encourages students to interact with family, friends, and the community at large.

The curriculum categories offered in the *Aida* study guide have been informed by the basic standards of education detailed in *Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education, 2nd Edition*, written by John S. Kendall and Robert J. Marzano (1997)*. This definitive compilation was published by Mid-Continent Regional Education Laboratory, Inc. (McREL) and the Association for Supervision and Curricular Development (ASDC) after systematic collection, review, and analysis of noteworthy national and state curricular documents in all subjects.

The *Aida* study guide is for you, the educator, in response to your need for standards-compliant curriculum. We hope this study guide will help you incorporate *Aida* into your classroom activities.

* A summary of the National Standards covered in this guide can be found on the inside back cover.

Aida SYNOPSIS

IN THE EGYPTIAN ROOM of a modern museum, Amneris, once a queen of the ancient kingdom, invites the audience into a tale of love and a struggle for power in a time when war raged between Egypt and its southern neighbor, Nubia.

An Egyptian army captain, Radames, prepares to sail back up the Nile River toward home when his soldiers bring on board a group of Nubian women they have captured. One of them, Aida, shows particular courage and cunning, and Radames is struck by her continued defiance even to his face.

Radames returns to his homeland and sends Aida away with his Nubian servant, Mereb, as a gift for the Egyptian princess, Amneris. Radames also greets his father, Chief Minister Zoser, who reminds him of his promise to marry Amneris. Zoser reveals to the audience his plot to poison the Pharaoh so that Radames can rule Egypt.

Before Mereb presents Aida to the princess, he recognizes that Aida is a princess as well, in Nubia, a secret that will put her life in peril should the Egyptians learn it. The vain but fashionable Amneris is thrilled with her new gift when she learns Aida can make beautiful clothes.

That evening, the Pharaoh announces that Radames and Amneris will be married in seven days, yet Radames and Aida continue to grow more enchanted with one another.

Aida visits her people in the slave camps and promises to fight for them. The next day, she pleads with Radames to help the Nubians, and the young captain, now in love, kisses her. Amneris confides in Aida that Radames is slipping away from her, but when he gives away all his possessions to the Nubian slaves, the princess takes it as a sign of his devotion to her. Aida knows the truth, and that evening she gives in to

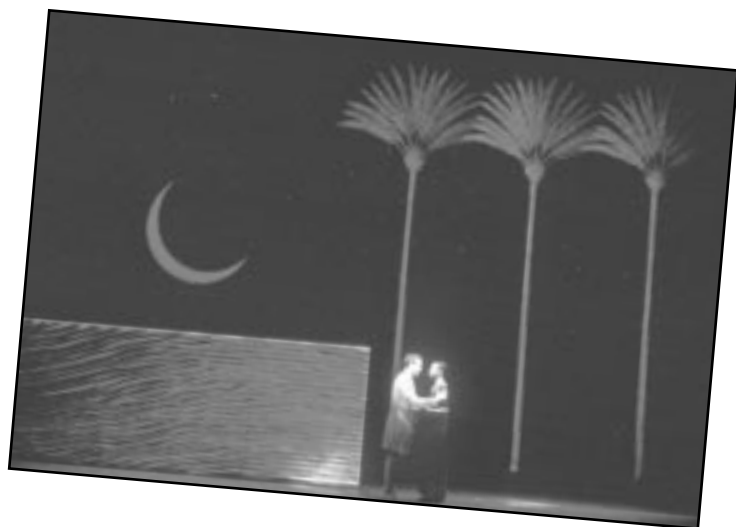


her love for Radames; however, when Egyptian soldiers capture Aida's father, the Nubian king, the lovers' devotion to each other is put to the test.

Aida schemes to free her father on the evening of the royal wedding. Meanwhile Radames tells his father that he does not want the Egyptian throne, and the two battle over his love of Aida. Finally, Zoser orders her death. A slave girl sacrifices herself to save Aida, but Mereb and

her people fear their princess may choose Radames over her nation. When the two meet, Radames says that he will call off the wedding, but Aida insists that he marry the princess, so that he will be able to bring peace between their countries. Amneris, though, has witnessed the secret meeting between the lovers.

Amneris and Radames are wed anyway but, after the wedding, Radames tries to prevent the Egyptian army from stopping Aida's escape. On the banks of the Nile, Radames finally discovers that he has fallen in love with a Nubian princess, not a simple slave girl. The Nubian king escapes, but Aida is left behind to stand trial with her beloved Radames. Amneris demands to sentence the traitors, and shows as much mercy as she can: Aida and Radames will spend an eternity together entombed beneath the sands of the Egyptian desert.



MUSICAL Numbers

14

"Aida"

Every Story Is a Love Story	Amneris
Fortune Favors the Brave	Radames and the Soliders
The Past Is Another Land	Aida
Another Pyramid	Zoser and the Ministers
How I Know You	Mereb and Aida
My Strongest Suit	Amneris and Women of the Palace
Enchantment Passing Through	Radames and Aida
My Strongest Suit (Reprise)	Amneris and Aida
Dance of the Robe	Aida, Nehebka and the Nubians
Not Me	Radames, Mereb, Aida and Amneris
Elaborate Lives	Radames and Aida
The Gods Love Nubia	Aida, Nehebka and the Nubians

ACT II

A Step Too Far	Amneris, Radames and Aida
Easy As Life	Aida
Like Father Like Son	Zoser, Radames and the Ministers
Radames' Letter	Radames
How I Know You (Reprise)	Mereb
Written in the Stars	Aida and Radames
I Know the Truth	Amneris
Elaborate Lives (Reprise)	Aida and Radames
Every Story Is a Love Story	Amneris

CHARACTER Breakdown

Aida – a Nubian Princess

Radames – an Egyptian Captain, betrothed to Amneris

Amneris – an Egyptian Princess, daughter of the Pharaoh

Mereb – the Nubian servant of Radames

Zoser – Chief Minister to the Pharaoh, father of Radames

Pharaoh – ruler of Egypt, father of Amneris

Nehebka – a Nubian slave

Amonasro – the Nubian King, Aida's father

Soliders, Ministers, Nubian slaves, Women of the Palace

AIDA Creators

ELTON JOHN

Music

Elton John is one of the most successful recording artists of our time. He has sold over 60 million records in the United States, had 21 platinum albums, and at one point scored 29 consecutive Top 40 hits.

But success didn't come easily. Born Reginald Dwight in Middlesex, England, in 1947, John began studying piano at the age of four, and later sharpened his skills at the Royal Academy of Music. Throughout the 1960s, John struggled as a musician in a band called Bluesology. He teamed up with songwriting partner Bernie Taupin in 1968 and had some success writing music for other artists. In 1969, he released his first solo recording, the largely ignored "Empty Sky." Finally, in 1970, an eponymous album would launch his career with the hit singles "Your Song" and "Border Song." In the decades to come, the string of hits would continue, from the '70s "Rocketman," "Daniel," and "Don't Go Breaking My Heart" to the '80s "I'm Still Standing," "I Guess That's Why They Call It the Blues," and "I Don't Want to Go on with You Like That," and into the '90s with "The One," "Believe," and a rewritten version of "Candle in the Wind," a tribute to Princess Diana that became the biggest-selling single of all time.

In the early 1990s, John collaborated with lyricist Tim Rice on the score for the 1994 Walt Disney Pictures movie, *The Lion King*. The recording yielded two top ten hits, "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" and "Circle of Life," and earned the songwriters an Academy Award. The 1997 staging of the film for Broadway by director Julie Taymor received six Tony® Awards including Best Musical, and in 1999, a Grammy® for Best Musical Show Album. John continued his collaboration with Rice in the 2000 Dreamworks movie *The Road to El Dorado* and with the current Broadway production of *Aida*, which won the 2000 Tony® Award for Best Score.

John says that writing *Aida* was a chance to try something he'd never attempted before: a full-length

cont'd on p. 6



Photo credit: Tony Russell

TIM RICE

Lyrics

Tim Rice was pulled away from a horribly misspent career as a lawyer in 1965 at the age of 21 when he met a 17-year-old named Andrew Lloyd Webber and they collaborated on a musical called *The Likes of Us*. The pair would go on to create such landmark musicals as *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Evita*. Rice has also written lyrics for *Blondel* (1983) with composer Stephen Oliver; *Chess* (1986) with Benny Andersson and Bjorn Ulvaeus of the music group Abba; and *Starmania/Tycoon* (1991).

Rice took over as lyricist for the late Howard Ashman to complete the score of the Disney film *Aladdin* with Alan Menken, and contributed to the original music in the Broadway stage production of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. In 1997 Rice collaborated again with Menken on the musical *King David*, which opened the renovated New Amsterdam Theatre with a seven-day concert staging. The theatre is now home to Rice's musical collaboration with Elton John, *The Lion King*. Rice won three Academy Awards® during the 1990s for his film compositions: "A Whole New World" from *Aladdin*, "Can You Feel the Love Tonight" from *The Lion King*, and "You Must Love Me" from *Evita*. His most recent film work is the music for *The Road to El Dorado*, also with Elton John.

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AIDA Creators

ELTON JOHN *cont'd from p. 5*

musical written directly for the Broadway stage. He told *The New York Times* what a frightening prospect it was to take on the project. "I'm a comfortable artist, concerts always sold out, which is nice, but that can be boring. It takes courage to diversify and have other challenges. I want to succeed desperately, but I'm a novice. I have a great CV, but I'm putting my foot in the water with this one."

The story of *Aida*, John says, is one that touches him in many ways. "It's a beautiful, complex love story, where bigotry and hatred are swept out the window, and love, compassion, forgiveness, and understanding triumph. In this day and age, I'm a great believer in the human spirit triumphing over evil in any way."

John has continued to fight for the human spirit through his work with the Elton John AIDS Foundation, which has distributed more than \$13 million in grants worldwide since 1992. In 1998, in honor of his contributions to charity and the arts, John was knighted by the Queen of England and bestowed the title Sir Elton John CBE.

TIM RICE *cont'd from p. 5*

Rice is seeking a U.S. publisher for his first volume of memoirs, *Oh What a Circus*, already published in England. He is an aficionado of popular music and a diehard cricket fan, both of which have led to an extensive publishing career. He is the author of over 30 books on British pop music (and 1986's BBC Radio "Rock Brain of the Year"), as well as 25 yearbooks and many articles on his beloved cricket.

Rice received the honor of British Knighthood in 1994. Of *Aida*, Rice told *Playbill* magazine, "When you approach the creation of a new musical, the story is the most important thing, and we began with one of the great ones. If you can add a wonderful score, you have a really good chance of coming up with a great show."

DAVID HENRY HWANG

LINDA WOOLVERTON

Book

Before tackling the book — the theatrical term for spoken words and story structure — for *Aida*, Linda Woolverton wrote the book for both the film and Broadway stage versions of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. For the stage production she was nominated for a 1995 Tony® Award for Best Book of a Musical, and shared a 1998 Olivier Award for Best New Musical for the London production. The 1993 film won a Golden Globe award for Best Musical/Comedy film and was nominated for an Academy Award® for Best Picture.

Woolverton is also cowriter of the films *Homeward Bound* and *The Lion King*. She is the author of the teen novels *Running Before the Wind* and *Star-Wind*, and is

working on a screenplay about the 30-year history of American Bandstand for Jersey Films. Woolverton lives in Los Angeles with her husband, Lee Flicker, and daughter, Keaton.

In working on *Aida*, Woolverton told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* that she wanted to approach the story from a modern perspective. "I'm interested in the relationship between Aida and Amneris," she said, "not just as slave and master, or rivals for Radames, but as women who were both born into the role of princess, who are equals."

AIDA Creators

Book

David Henry Hwang was 21 years old, a recent graduate of Stanford University, when his first play, *F.O.B.*, was presented by the National Playwrights Conference. It went on to an off-Broadway run in New York that would win the young playwright an Obie Award for best new play, an astonishing beginning to a career that would win Hwang a Tony® Award and see him nominated for a Pulitzer Prize by the time he was 30. In 1988, he won Tony®, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and John Gassner Awards for his Broadway debut, *M. Butterfly*. His most recent play, *Golden Child* was nominated for a Tony in 1998 and for an Obie in 1997. His other plays include *The Dance and the Railroad*, *Family Devotions*, *Sound and Beauty*, *Face Value*, *Bondage*, and an adaptation of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*.

He collaborated with composer Phillip Glass on the libretto for the musical works *1,000 Airplanes on the Roof* and *The Voyage*, and with Bright Sheng on *The Silver River*. Hwang has also written the screenplays for *M. Butterfly* and *Golden Gate*, and cowrote the song "Solo" with Prince.

Hwang told the *Los Angeles Times* that he and director Robert Falls wanted to approach *Aida* with complexity and subtlety. "Bob was very clear from the beginning that there was a political dimension to the story which was very important," Hwang said. "Can love overcome differences, hatred, a painful history between peoples? It's a question with very obvious resonance today. But it's a complex question that does not have a clear yes-or-no answer."

ROBERT FALLS

Director/Book

Robert Falls made his professional debut as a director when, as a student at the University of Illinois, the first play he ever directed was picked up by Chicago's St. Nicholas Theatre. He went on to become artistic director at the city's Wisdom Bridge Theatre, and by age 31 artistic director of the Goodman Theatre. In 1999 he won a Tony® Award as Best Director for his revival of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, and he received an Obie Award in 1995 for directing Eric Bogosian's *subUrbia*. His Broadway credits also include *The Young Man from Atlanta*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *The Night of the Iguana* and *The Speed of Darkness*. Falls gained international attention for his adaptation of *In the Belly of the Beast* in 1983. He has written a new book for the Goodman Theatre revival of the musical *Pal Joey*, and collaborated on productions of Randy Newman's *Faust*, Frank Galati's reworked *Cry, the Beloved Country*, and revivals of Sondheim's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and *A Little Night Music*.

Falls is also a respected opera director with productions at the Metropolitan Opera, Chicago's Lyric Opera, and the Grand Theatre de Geneva in Switzerland.