

HANDBOOK OF THE OPERAS

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Handbook of the Operas by Edith B. Ordway

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THE OPERAS**

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REVISED AND ENLARGED

By

EDITH B. ORDWAY

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE second edition of the "Handbook of the Operas" contains six additional operas that have been given presentation during the last two years (except "The Children of Don," the première of which was in 1912), whose inclusion adds materially to the completeness of the book. Three are novelties which are significant in many ways, although not yet have they achieved notable success. They are: "The Children of Don," by Josef Holbrooke; "Goyescas," by Enrique Granados; and "The Canterbury Pilgrims," by Reginald De Koven. Of revivals, the three chosen are: "Andrea Chénier," by Umberto Giordano; "Die Entführung aus dem Serail," by Mozart; and "Griséïdis," by Jules Massenet. The stories of these additional operas appear at the end of the text, and not in alphabetical order in the body of the book. These operas also have a separate index.

The author acknowledges with gratitude the kindly reception given the first edition, and hopes that this edition may even more fully meet the needs of the large and increasing public of opera lovers.

August, 1917.

E. B. O.



PREFACE

AMONG the fifty grand operas the stories of which are included in this book are the most important of the old favorites, the most notable successes of recent seasons in the eastern United States, and half a dozen others whose *première* or first American production or American revival is announced for the coming season.

As they are the operas chosen by popular interest, the collection has a wide range in character, varying from lyric comedy to epic tragedy, from simple settings of allegorical or fairy tales to elaborate presentations of heroic music-drama. Their musical rank is that of *grand* opera, that is, opera in which every word is sung and the recitative is generally accompanied by the orchestra. They are characterized as comic, tragic, fairy, allegorical, sentimental, or heroic, according to the prevailing interest, which is revealed more by the music than by the plot. They are given in alphabetical order for convenient reference, except that the members of Wagner's tetralogy are given under the title, "The Ring of the Nibelung."

The story of an opera, difficult as it is clearly and worthily to relate, is that central dramatic situation which furnished the composer with his major inspiration, and moved the librettist to impassioned recital. It therefore makes the chief appeal to the hearer. Without a knowledge of it on his part the most realistic of opera music fails of its full effect. With such a knowledge, the music is vivified and the actual force of the tragedy or comedy felt.

With each opera is given interesting and carefully verified data. The name of the composer and the date of the first

production serve to place the opera in the line of artistic succession. The name of the writer of the book, or libretto, is often of great musical or literary significance. The full list of the characters, together with their singing parts, is included in order that the musical nature of the work and the dramatic force of each scene may be realized.

The difficulty in pronouncing foreign names for which no English equivalent is in common use has been met by simple suggestions under each foreign title, and by an Index in which the pronunciation of the more important names is given.

E. B. O.

MEDFORD, MASS., September, 1915.

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AÏDA

(*Ah-é-dah*)

ITALIAN* tragic grand opera. Music by Giuseppe Verdi. Plot by Mariette Bey; French prose version by Camille du Locle; Italian verse form by Antonio Ghislanzoni. Composed for the Khedive of Egypt. First production, Cairo, 1871. The scene is laid in Memphis and Thebes at the time of the Pharaohs.

CHARACTERS

PHARAOH, King of Egypt.....	<i>Bass</i>
RADAMÈS, Captain of the Egyptian guards.....	<i>Tenor</i>
RAMFIS, High Priest of Egypt.....	<i>Bass</i>
AMONARBO, King of Ethiopia and father of Aïda....	<i>Baritone</i>
AMNERIS, daughter of Pharaoh.....	<i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>
AÏDA, an Ethiopian slave.....	<i>Soprano</i>

A messenger, priests, priestesses, ministers, captains, soldiers, functionaries, slaves, Ethiopian prisoners, and the Egyptian populace.

ACT I. In the hall of the Egyptian king's palace at Memphis stand Ramfis, the high priest, and Radamès, the young captain. Ramfis announces that an invading army of Ethiopians has appeared before Thebes and that the goddess Isis has designated who shall be commander-in-chief of the Egyptian forces; he then hastens to the king. Radamès reveals his ambition by imagining himself a victorious war-

*This refers to the language in which the opera was originally written, not to the nationality of the composer nor to the setting of the plot, except where the composer is an American.