

Director's notes

Nabucco is probably the most important piece in Verdi's production... After the serious flop of his opera buffa *Un giorno di regno*, and the horrible personal drama of having lost his wife and his two children, young Verdi was ready to give up his aspirations and bury himself in a farm, but he was persuaded to give it another try... That's why, even if *Otello* and *Falstaff*, his last two operas, represent the top of his musical genius, it is the success of *Nabucco* that changed his life, and the history of melodrama, forever.

How to stage *Nabucco* without falling in the trap of framing the production with one of the many historical chapters of cruelty against the Hebrew nation? For me, the answer is in deciding which is going to be the "dramaturgical engine" of the piece. I mean, "just" narrating the story of sufferance inflicted by a dominating nation to a dominated one, is not interesting, simply because it has been done many times, some of them with dubious taste. Therefore, I prefer to read the plot from a different angle: the story of a formidable warrior, who discovers to have failed as a father and the journey into repentance of a young woman, Abigaille, whose complex of inferiority made of her a capricious and violent person. While Abigaille's first aria shows us the real side of her insecure being, Nabucco's tears after having been knocked off the throne, are not for his own pain, but for witnessing how hate had undermined his family and his kingdom.

With this in mind and with the conviction that there are not so many "decent" concepts still free... to be used as a frame for a new production of *Nabucco*, we have decided not to force the plot into any specific historical chapter of domination or extermination. On the contrary, we have chosen to recreate the piece with a clean approach to the libretto, evidenced in the pure lines of the set and the costumes —inspired by Vasilij Kandinskij's work—, and the essential, purposely simple, actor's direction: *Nabucco*'s style has one leg in the *belcanto* legacy and the other one in Verdi's first attempts of *melodrama*, the style he developed and for which he fought all his life, sometimes even angrily, if we trust his letters. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly differentiate in the staging of the opera this dichotomy between those moments in which a more or less "modern" acting is possible, from those others in which the job of the director is to provide the structure for the best musical rendition of the piece, without distracting with an unnecessary action, foreign to the style.

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