



Aida

Words | Suzy Fontes Photography | Jerzy Wierzbicki

The Polish National Opera kick-started the third season of Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) last week, with the magical performance of Giuseppe Verdi's *Aida* - directed by Roberto Lagana Manoli and conducted by Maestro Patrick Fournillier.

Aida, written 140 years ago by Italian romantic composer Giuseppe Verdi, is a brilliant opera that is based on the timeless story of a love triangle. It is set in ancient Egypt and involves *Aida*, an Egyptian princess and *Radamès*, an Egyptian military commander. For three consecutive days ROHM presented a veritable feast of *Aida* for opera buffs in Muscat, as well-known names from the world of opera staged the classic opera - *Mardi Byers* performed *Aida's* role on September 12th and 14th and *Lucrecia Garcia* on September 13th.

Over 300 artistes, including members of the orchestra, choir, singers, ballet dancers, technicians, etc., arrived in Muscat to present a memorable opera. A team from the Polish National Opera had come in March for a reconnaissance, to prepare for the grand performance and assess the facilities for the presentation.

"We had a preliminary visit in March. The logistics involved in staging an opera of such magnitude is huge. We had to ship eight large containers of costumes, wigs, etc., required for the artistes," Grzegorz Chelmecki, Deputy General Director of Polish National Opera told Y.



He was full of rave reviews for the Royal Opera House; he was taken in by the striking façade and the plush interiors, which, he opines, is on par with the best opera houses around the world. "Usually we need to

modify the performance according to the stage space, but here we were awestruck by the excellence of the place. This opera house is perfect; it is beautiful, very professional and well equipped," he described.



At The Royal Opera House


It is the first time that this Polish production - designed and directed by Italian Roberto Lagana Manoli - was staged outside Warsaw. It had its premiere in Warsaw in 2005. "In Warsaw, we usually have ten premieres during the season and this means ten times someone is working on the music and libretto to put across new ideas," notes Chelmecki.

He describes Aida as a colourful opera... "It is full of life; the cast is fantastic," he says, describing the classical element of the opera. However, he is quick to point out that there are, at present, two attitudes to opera: classic and modern - it is about modern interpretations. "There are people who want new operas, but most prefer classical operas. There is an element of scepticism with the new language of opera..." he adds.

ABOUT AIDA

Giuseppe Verdi's Aida is said to have been commissioned partly for a Middle Eastern audience and was staged at Cairo's Khedive Opera House. It is a story of a bitter love triangle, involving Aida, an Ethiopian slave, Amneris, an Egyptian princess and Radames, an Egyptian army general. Presented against a backdrop of war and cultural oppression, the opera narrates the tale of conflicting loyalties and forbidden passion. Radames falls in love with Aida, but is torn between his love for her and his loyalty to the Pharaoh.

The love triangle is formed when the Pharaoh's daughter Amneris falls in love with Radamès; it is unrequited love, as he has no feelings for her. Both Radamès and Aida are in a dilemma - they have to make a choice between their love for each other and their native land.



Grzegorz Chelmecki