

Livermore’s Aida transforms Rome’s Circus Maximus

Posted on July 12, 2026 by Benigna Mallebrein

ROME — Giuseppe Verdi’s “Aida” moves outdoors this month, staged for the first time at the Circus Maximus, the vast open field in central Rome once used for ancient chariot races. Six performances from July 12 to July 28, 2026, anchor the Rome Opera’s summer season.

The production is directed by Davide Livermore, the Turin-born director whose staging of “Aida” drew acclaim at Rome’s Teatro Costanzi, the city’s main opera house, in 2023. He has now reworked it for the open-air scale of the Circus Maximus, pairing virtual scenery and video projections with Verdi’s score to tell the opera’s story of forbidden love between an enslaved Ethiopian princess and an Egyptian military commander.

A story of opposing sides

Livermore said the opera’s emotional core still speaks to audiences today. “Verdi talks about the extraordinary power of love, which somehow manages to bring together two people from opposite sides of a war, two ethnic groups locked in conflict,” he said. “Understanding another person’s reasons makes us better human beings, because it opens the heart, the mind, the soul.”

Conductor Daniele Callegari, who leads the Orchestra of the Rome Opera for the entire run, said he approached the score looking past its scale. “Behind its apparent monumentality, what strikes me most about “Aida” is how deeply human it is,” he said. “I don’t find heroes or victors in this music. I find people forced to choose between love, duty and freedom, and directing this opera means never letting the grandeur of the staging bury the truth of that feeling.”

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Aida, Rome Opera 2023 *(Credits: Fabrizio Sansoni)*

A cast built for the arena

The title role rotates between three sopranos across the run. Elena Stikhina debuts the part in Rome after recent performances in Paris, Vienna and Berlin, alternating with Yolanda Auyanet and Aleksandra Kurzak. Angela Meade and Valentina Pernozzoli share the role of Amneris, the Egyptian princess and rival for Radames' love.

Luciano Ganci returns as Radames, the role he first sang at the Rome Opera in 2023, alternating with Ivan Magri. Ludovic Tezier joins the cast for a single performance as Amonasro on July 22, sharing the role with Ernesto Petti for the remaining dates.

Chorus Director Circo Visco, Set designer Gio Forma, costume designer Gianluca Falaschi and lighting designer Fiammetta Baldiserri complete the creative team behind a production built to hold its own against the scale of one of Rome's largest ancient monuments.

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